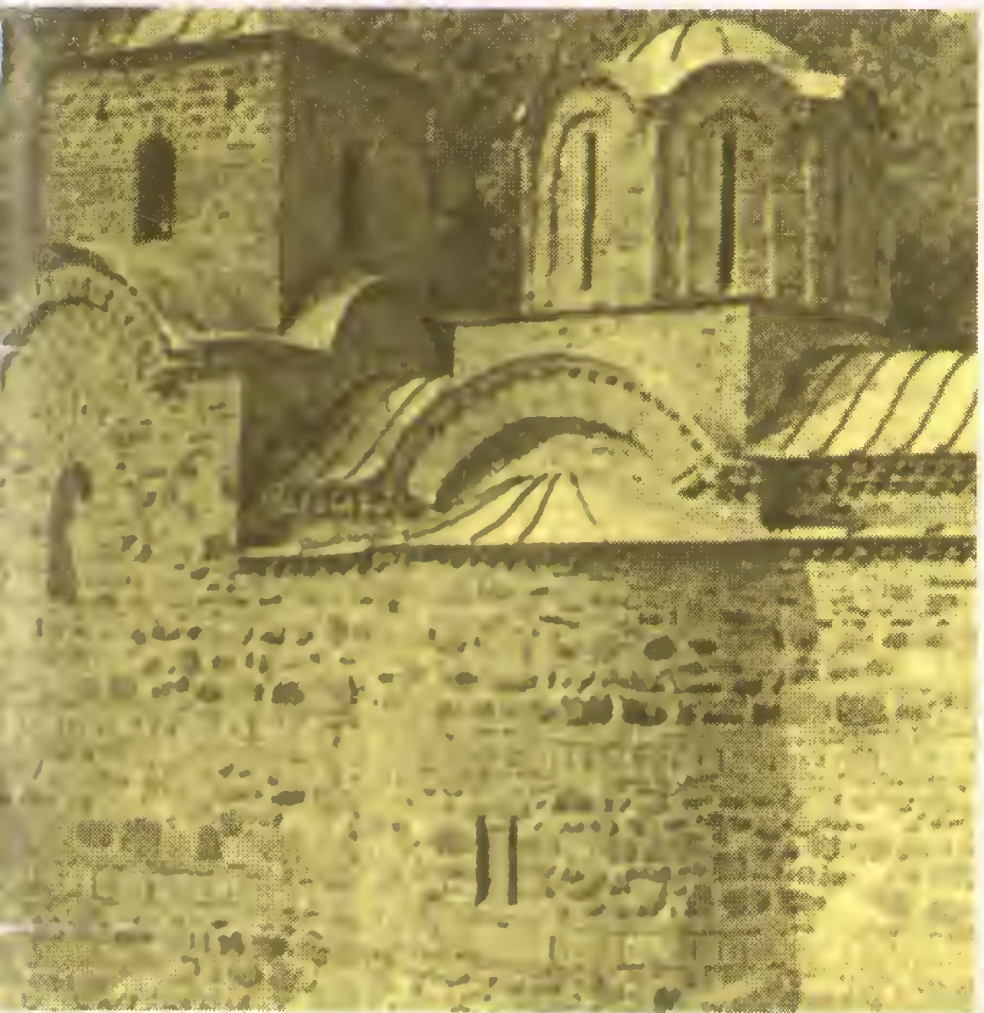


# THE BULGARIANS IN TZARIBROD AND THE TZARIBROD REGION 1878-1920



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**BULGARIAN  
DIPLOMATIC  
REVIEW**

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IN TZARIBROD AND  
THE TZARIBROD REGION  
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BULGARIAN  
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## TZARIBROD REGION

Following the decision of the Berlin Treaty of 1878 according to which the town of Pirot was conceded to the Kingdom of Serbia, a border district was created to the east of the Serbo-Bulgarian border with Tzaribrod as its center, the largest town at that time.

It is said that the most active figure before the Bulgarian authorities for promoting Tzaribrod as the center of the region was Manciple priest Peter Shishkov, who moved, after 1877, from Pirot to Tzaribrod. Later he is also instrumental for the construction of the new church, the building of the high school and that of the boarding school.

Tzaribrod and the region were visited by many Bulgarian scholars in the first years after the liberation of Bulgaria. Each one of them left his contribution to the history of this Bulgarian territory in accordance with his professional interests. But no one acted the way the Czech Konstantin Ireček did. He left us a precise and useful picture of the life of the population of Tzaribrod region, of their way of living, their traditions, and national psychology. He writes the following about the town of Tzaribrod itself in 1883: "The small town is situated in a pleasant area in a longish and very narrow

valley, between high slopes covered with forests, along the left bank of the Nishava River. Among the clay houses with tile roofs one can see a few new white administrative buildings. There is a regional governor, a justice of peace, a customs building and a state school with three grades. In its yard we were shown the two captured eagles. There is no doctor and the apothecary is seated in the chemical laboratory of the school. Along the river there are huts and round clay buildings for drying corn. The population of 1074 people consists of the old locals and immigrants from Pirot who, critical of the Serbian government, came to live in Bulgaria. In the main street, which is very lively, one can see many shops and taverns. I stayed in a tavern with low-ceiling and small rooms with beds. It bore the name of the near-by Vidlich Mountain that divides the Nishava valley and Visochnitza. In the center there is a half-built mosque reminding of the spahis and the Circassians, now gone. Stories tell that 200 years ago Tzaribrod was a large regional center with 800 houses but we have no confirmation of that... The region of Tzaribrod is mountainous, with numerous poor villages and narrow pathways. There are no vine-

*Wedding horo in front of the old tavern Balkan. Artist: Meta Petrov, from the cycle The Old Tzaribrod*







Meta Petrov. *The Old Market*

yards here and in Visok and all the wine is imported from Pirot. There are no water buffalos as we saw them in Slivnitza. Many peasants in the Tzaribrod region say that they have never seen such a domestic animal, so common in other parts of Bulgaria”.

It is strange why this inquisitive and pedantic historian is so impressed by the lack of water buffalos in Tzaribrod and even inquires among the population about these animals, so untypical for Europeans. Thanks to this same inquisitiveness we have good description of the typical national dress in the villages of the Tzaribrod region: “The male dress here and in the Trun region resembles that of the Macedonian debarlii: a white dress of sheep’s wool, white leg pieces, a red girdle and a black sheepskin cap (barla). Women wear head covers decorated with flowers, and red or black tunics; a red apron resembling a rug with its vertical stripes; round the waist they have girdles, made of red wool or of leather, with silver decorations. The young girls, like those in the Sofia region, have hair decorations made of fur that can be up to a meter long and covered with minute tails with silver coins. Their feet are of course clad in leather soft shoes...”.

Following Article 3 of the newly adopted Constitution of the Principality of Bulgaria, the territory of the country is divided administratively into districts, regions and municipalities. According to the first division of the Principality of Bulgaria the Tzaribrod region is included in the Turnovo district of the Sofia province. In 1880 a decree was published

for taking a census in the Principality of Bulgaria, starting on January 1, 1881. In March the same year the first results of the census in the Turnovo district are published and the population of Tzaribrod is included in it: 1074 people, 180 families in 164 houses.

The number of the houses in the small town of the regional center is not great but it is twice as big as this given for 1878. For comparison we shall add that the town of Trun, which is a district center, has at that time a population of 2323 and 376 houses; Sofia has 20 541 and 2968 houses. The population of the entire Tzaribrod region in 1881 is 20 857, i.e. equal to that of the city of Sofia at that time. It is a good resource for the development of Tzaribrod as a regional center.

Only two years after the census of 1881 a Decree of Prince Alexander I Battenberg sanctions a new List of the Urban and Village Municipalities in the Principality. The Tzaribrod region, according to this list, consists of one urban and five village municipalities:

**Tzaribrod urban municipality:** the town of Tzaribrod and the villages Durzhina, Malo Belovo, Radeina, Lukovitza, Zhelyusha, Goin dol, Gradine, Peturlyash, Slivnitza, Grapa, Paskashiya, Pracha, Dolna Nevlya, Vishan and Novo selo. The municipality borders on the territories of: Krushevo, Dragoman, Kalotina, Berin, Bachevo, Lipintzi, Banski dol, Borovo, Dolna Nevlya and the Serbian border.

**Borovo village municipality:** the villages of Borovo, Gorna Nevlya, Skruvenitza, Dragovita, Poganovo, Vlasi, and



Banski dol. The municipality borders on the territories of the villages: Nesla, Vishan, Dolna Nevlya, Pracha, Palya and Kalotina.

**Tuden village municipality:** the villages of Tuden, Bukurovtzi, Kalenovtzi, Murgash, Golyamo Malovo, Lopushnya, Shouma, Godech, Golesh, Sranintzi, Brebevnitza, Lipintzi and Berende.

**Kalotina village municipality:** the villages of Kalotina, Dragoil, Dragoman, Letnitza, Prekurste, Berende, Chepurlintzi, Berende izvor, Lipintzi and Bachevo. The municipality borders on the territories of: Yarlovtsi, Malo Malovo, Golyamo Malovo, Kamenovtzi, Bukurovtzi, Razboishte, Brebevnitza, Protopopintzi, Radeina, the town of Tzaribrod, Gradine, Lukovitza and Vishan.

**Protopopintzi village municipality:** the villages of Protopopintzi, Stanintzi, Golesh, Vurdalovtzi, Brebevnitza, Mazgosh, Mointzi, Smilovtzi, Gulenovtzi and Odorovtzi. The municipality borders of the territories of: Bachevo, Razboishte, Ropot, Smocha, Vulkavia, Izatovtzi, Bolev dol, Senokos, Peterlyash, Radena and the Serbian border.

**The Dolni Krivodol village municipality:** the villages of Dolni Krivodol, Slavina, Brakyovtzi, Kamenitza, Burlya, Gubesh and Smolcha. The municipality borders on the territories of: Gulenovtzi, Odorovtzi, Smilovtzi, Muzgosh, Golesh, Ropot, Gintzi and the Balkan Mountain in its Berkovitza part.

According to this list of the districts, regions and municipalities of the Principality, the Tzaribrod region is not among the regions of the district of Trun but is included in the Sofia district. Bosilegrad, which will later follow the destiny of Tzaribrod, is also a regional center – of the Bosilegrad region, but included in the district of Kyustendil. The changes after the unification of Southern and Northern Bulgaria and the Serbo-Bulgarian War that followed caused changes in the administrative and territorial division of the country and the distribution of the municipalities.

On May 23 a Decree announcing the new List of the Municipalities was published. It was made on the initiative of the Minister of the Interior and was based on the Law of Village Municipalities. The Tzaribrod region in this List includes one urban and nine village municipalities covering 64 settlements:

**Tzaribrod urban municipality:** the town of Tzaribrod and the villages Vishan, Novosel chiflik, Paskashiya, Gradinye and Malo Belovo.

**Borovo village municipality:** Borovo, Skurvenitza, Dragovita, Poganovo, Gorna Nevlya, Dolna Nevlya, Pracha and Banskyl dol.

**Kalotina village municipality:** Kalotina, Bachevo, Lipintzi, Chepurlintzi, Berende-Izvor and Dragoil.

**Bukurovtzi village municipality:** Bukurovtzi, Kalenovtzi, Razboishte, Prepos, Berende, Letnitza and Prekruste.

**Tuden village municipality:** Tuden, Murgash, Vrubnitza and Ropot.

**Komshtitza village municipality:** Komshtitza,



*The monument of Neshkovo near Tzaribrod*

Vulkovlya, Dolni Krivodol, Gorni Krivodol, Smolcha, Burlya and Gubesh.

**Smilovtzi village municipality:** Smilovtzi, Mointzi, Gulenovtzi, Odorovtzi, Pepurlash, Radeina and Protopopintzi.

**Stanintzi village municipality:** Stanintzi, Brebevnitza, Vurdolovtzi, Muzgosh and Golesh.

**Zhelyusha village municipality:** Zhelyusha, Goin dol, Lukavitza, Durzhina, Slivnitza, Grapa and Vlasl.

**Slavina village municipality:** Slavina, Braikyovtzi, Izatovtzi, Senokos, Kamenitza and Bolev dol.

Only ten years after the Liberation the small town, which became a regional center, changed considerably. In 1888 Tzaribrod has already about 400 houses with 500 to 600 families. The census in the Principality of Bulgaria of December 31, 1905 indicates 587 buildings and a population of 3631. On its territory is the monastery of "St. Dimitar" and the Tzaribrod railway station, which has an important role for the connections of the town with the Bulgarian capital, on the one hand, and with Belgrade, Vienna and other European cities, on the other. Many ministers and statesmen and Prince Alexander I Battenberg him-



self, later also king Ferdinand, always met with the local population or were greeted by them on their way to European capitals. The people met them with flowers, flags and music. This is not only a boost for the self-confidence of the people of Tzaribrod but also builds in them a feeling of participation in Bulgaria's life and Bulgarian big policy.

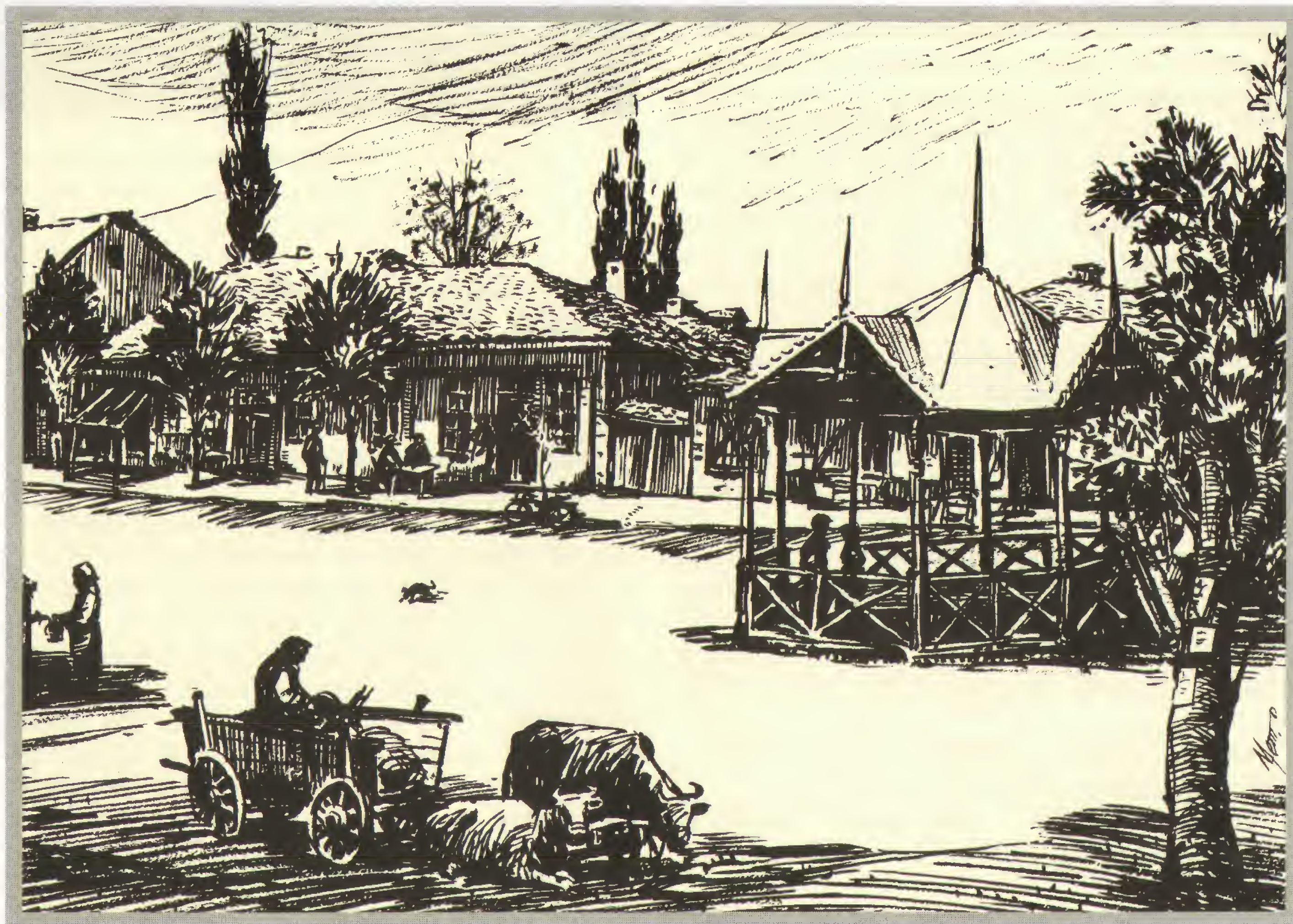
As early as the 1880s we can notice the division of the population of Tzaribrod into two informal parties: the "local citizens" and the "immigrants". To the first belong all native citizens of Tzaribrod who are not numerous – people from the neighboring villages, former and acting officials, sent here from other parts. To the second belong all people from Pirot. The first wave of immigrants from Pirot settles here after the Berlin Congress when Pirot remains outside Bulgaria, and the second wave is after the Serbo-Bulgarian War of 1885. The Pirot colony in Tzaribrod is growing and gradually it starts to dominate in many aspects. The people from Pirot become the larger and more active part of the craftsmen and the tradesmen, of the intelligentsia in Tzaribrod and this is the reason from permanent jealousy and competition which will remain for the next ten or twenty years. In the same time the ever-growing Pirot colony in Tzaribrod turns the town into some kind of center for contacts of the Bulgarian population in the Pirot region with their

brothers in Bulgaria.

We can judge about the Pirot colony in Tzaribrod, which has a population of 4000 in 1909, and their relations with the old citizens of the small town, from an article in the *Nishava* newspaper: "The town is full of Bulgarian immigrants from Pirot and the vicinities and within 15–20 years it has grown considerably. Today Tzaribrod is a town of more than 4000 people. The local people are mainly owners of real property and they are occupied with agriculture and animal breeding. The immigrants are craftsmen and tradesmen. There was an antagonism between the native population and the newly arrived citizens since the Pirot colony had a higher social status and wanted to gain priority and govern the affairs of the town. The local people, as a majority, would not give up their priorities so easily. But the old antagonism disappeared with time..."

We find a very interesting opinion about the role of Pirot immigrants in Tzaribrod expressed in 1920 in an article of the *Radical* newspaper: "The history of the town is a history of a referendum. For the first time after the Berlin Congress here settled those Bulgarians from Pirot and the vicinities who refused to stay under the rule of the new oppressors. These are the same people about whom Kanitz writes: "The Bulgarian Christian community in Pirot belongs,

Meta Petrov. *The Little Pavilion*







*In the yard of the royal residence, Sofia, June 1941*

from the very beginning, to the Bulgarian church movement, in the first ranks of the national party, and is in permanent war with the bishops, imposed by the Constantinople Fener”.

The same article describes it as a small but beautiful town, “standing on the two banks of the river Nishava, cut through by a rail way, it attracts the attention of every traveler with its new buildings, with its straight and clean streets, covered on all sides with orchards and green meadows”. Thus gradually Tzaribrod becomes a small town with dynamic development, trying to reach many of the towns of the municipality that have old traditions and great contributions in the period of the National Revival. A notable contribution in this development is due to the immigrants from Pirot and other towns and villages of the old Nishava eparchy. After several years some of them move to Sofia and other big towns of the country to be replaced by the population from the neighboring villages of the Tzaribrod region. We can judge about the patriotic spirit of the people of Tzaribrod by the town toponymy – the names of streets, squares, pubs, etc. In the period after 1878 one can often see in Tzaribrod names like those of the hotels “Bulgaria”, “San Stefano”, the pub and beer house “Bulgaria”, the coffee shop “Bulgaria”, a school named “Hristo Botev”, a primary school called “Vassil Levsky”, “King Ferdinand” and “Prince Boris” squares, the streets “Benkovsky”, “Slivnitza”, “Captain Zlatev”, etc.

The Tzaribrod region, following the List of the Municipalities in the Principality of Bulgaria in 1890, has 11 municipalities with 62 settlements of purely Bulgarian pop-

ulation. The statistics of that period has “None” under the heading “non-Bulgarian” for all villages in the district, including the town of Tzaribrod.

Ten years later, in 1901–1902, due to the increase in the number of the population and the growth of some settlements, the Tzaribrod region is organized into 15 municipalities with 98 settlements (one town, 85 villages and 12 hamlets) as follows:

#### **The Tzaribrod region (1901–1902)**

**Borovo municipality.** The villages Banski dol, Borovo, Gorna Nevlya, Dolna Nevlya, Dragovita, Poganovo, Pracha and Skruvenitza.

**Bukurovtzi municipality.** The villages Berende, Bukurovtzi, Kalenovtzi, Letnitza, Murgash, Prekruste and Razboishte.

**Gaber municipality.** The villages Bahalin, Gaber, Dragotintzi, Kambelevtzi, Taban, Tzuturovtzi, Chorul, Chukovezer, Yalbotina and Yarlovitzi.

**Godech municipality.** The villages Lopushi and the hamlets of Glotnitza, Elechanova, Yovkina, Molak, Negulova, Ravna, Staro selo, Stokina, Trap, Vakarel, Raetska and Stranska.

**Golemo Malovo municipality.** The villages Golemo Malovo, Malo Malovo and Rayanovtzi.

**Gradine municipality.** The villages Vishan, Gradine, Malo Belovo and Novosel chiflik.

**Zhelyusha municipality.** The villages Vlasi, Goin dol,





Meta Petrov. *The Market*

Grapa, Durzhina, Zhelyusha, Lukovitza, Planinitza and Slivnitza.

**Kalotina municipality.** The villages Bachevo, Berende izvor, Dragoil, Dragoman, Kalotina, Lipintzi and Chepurlintzi.

**Komshtitza municipality.** The villages Butlya, Vulkovia, Gorni Krivodol, Gubesh, Dolni Krivodol, Komshtitza and Smolcha.

**Nedelishte municipality.** The villages Vladoslavtzi, Grulska padina, Krusha, Mahaf chiflik, Nedelishte, Nesla, Novo selo and Chekanetz.

**Slavina municipality.** The villages Bolev dol, Braikovtzi, Izatovtzi, Kametitza, Slavina and Senokos.

**Smilovtzi municipality.** The villages Gulenovtzi, Mointzi, Odorovtzi, Peterlash, Propopintzi, Radeina and Smilovtzi.

**Stanintzi municipality.** The villages Brebenitza, Vurdolovtzi, Golesh, Muzgosh and Stanintzi.

**Tuden municipality.** The villages Vurbnitza, Ropot and Tuden.

**Tzaribrod municipality:** the town of Tzaribrod and the village of Paskashiya.

A few years later the Borovo and Zhelyush municipalities are divided into five independent municipalities and the number of municipalities in the Tzaribrod region reaches 19. They are: Tzaribrod, Borovo, Gaber, Godech, Gorno Malovo, Bukurovo, Doli Nevlyan, Zhelyuysha, Kalotina, Komshtitza, Kamenetz, Lukavich, Nedelino, Poganovo, Slavina, Smilovo,

Stanyan, Tuden and Dragoman.

As a border region, Tzaribrod has to resolve a number of problems with transport links, industry and commercial exchange, which are impeded by the new border drawn not according to natural geographic conditions or ethnic realities but for strategic reasons and with explicit ambitions. The border itself has many irregular checkpoints, which are used deliberately by the Serbian border authorities to provoke incidents and result in talks on government level and exchange of diplomatic notes with requirements for corrections. The most favorable soil for such conflicts is the so-called "items of double property" of the population along the border. Part of their land property remained on the other side of the border. The people are forced to pass the border very often to work their land, for which they have to overcome the problems deliberately created by border authorities. As a result, some of the families leave their landed property and move to the interior of the country. Others whose land remains entirely or mainly in Serbia are forced to settle in Serbia because of the persistent problems created by the border authorities.

A report № 9157 of December 19, 1882 on this matter is prepared by the Administrative Department of the Ministry of the Interior. In it we can read the following, concerning the difficulties created on the Serbo-Bulgarian border for the Bulgarian population of Tzaribrod region and other border regions:



"The border line, which divides Bulgaria from Serbia is drawn in such a way that only arable land, meadows, forests and pastures, belonging to Bulgarian peasants, have remained on the other side of the border, and vice versa. Whole villages were divided into two. There are families whose houses are on one side of the border and whose land on the other. In this situation our government has always made concessions and has always been very careful. The Serbian peasants cross the border freely and use the pastures in the Principality and no passes are required of them. The government of Serbia however does not favor a similar attitude towards our citizens. The peasants from Tzaribrod and Trun encounter innumerable obstacles created by Serbian border authorities when they cross the border to work their land that has remained on the other side. For a year there have been so many complaints and reports of that... In addition to obstacles created for the population, there are also numerous incidents created by the Serbian border authorities..."

This is the context in which the newly created Tzaribrod region has to develop and to resolve many problems in the administrative structure, education, health care, the construction of administrative and other buildings, town planning and providing homes for the still going on immigration from Pirot which, on the eve of the Russian-Turkish War of 1877-1878, has a population of 12 000 Bulgarians and a small number of Turks.

Gradually Tzaribrod on the border grows into a regional town, which is no different from the towns in the heart of the country. It is not free from the vanity of the time, of the fashionable ways of life. This is how an anonymous citizen of Tzaribrod has described it in an article to the *Nishava* newspaper: "For a few years we can notice in our small town a great ambition for luxury, fashion, entertainments, and so on. It is a pity that it has captured all of our intelligent young people. Lots of money is spent on fashion and vanity. Almost every night the small town has a festive look. The comfortable life of the Europeans has recently settled in the small town... People want to live in luxury and even the social groups that are forced to work hard every day to earn their living are trying to put aside some money for luxury goods."

This atmosphere remains in Tzaribrod till WW I after which, by force of the Neuilly Peace Treaty, was handed over, together with the larger part of the region to the kingdom of Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia. In spite of that, for some time a Tzaribrod region still exists in Bulgaria, though without the town of Tzaribrod and without 37 of its villages, occupied by the Serbian army on December 6, 1920. This territorial unit of Bulgaria, that still bears the name of Tzaribrod region, includes ten municipalities: Bukorovtzi, Gaber, Godech, Golyamo Malevo, Dragoman, Kalotina, Komshtitza, Nedelishte, Stanintzi and Tuden.

*In front of the royal residence, Sofia, 1941*





## BULGARIAN MONUMENTS IN TZARIBROD AND THE TZARIBROD REGION

Very soon after the Liberation and especially after the unification and the Serbo-Bulgarian War of 1885 that followed, Tzaribrod and the vicinities become an attractive place for the lovers of beautiful Bulgarian nature. Not only writers like Aleko Konstantinov and Ivan Vazov, but also historians and students of Bulgarian antiquity express their admiration. There are several reasons. First, Tzaribrod is very near Sofia. Second, the region had not been studied yet. Third, the border, not very far from Tzaribrod, makes all scholars or simply tourists heading in that direction stay in the town or the vicinities for some time. Thanks to these circumstances today we have a number of extremely valuable descriptions and documentations of epigraphic, architectural and other monuments of the late middle ages and the Revival period. Probably this is due to the fact that one of the first scholars to come were Slavs, mainly Czechs, like the brothers Karel and Henry Schkorpil and Konstantin Ireček. They paid serious attention to Old Bulgarian monuments as different from European travelers of the previous ages, who, passing many times along the route from Belgrade to Nish, Pirot and Tzaribrod to Constantinople and

back, were looking exclusively for ancient monuments and Greek and Latin inscriptions.

Karel and Henry Schkorpil published in their article "Ancient inscriptions from different parts of Bulgaria" one Slavic (Old Bulgarian) inscription from the monastery "St. John the Precursor" (the Poganovo monastery) near the village of Poganovo by the Erma River, between the two villages of Odorovtzi and Vlasi. The inscription is cut into a stone which forms part of the kitchen of the monastery. On it is written with Church Slavonic letters the year "7079 of the Creation" or 1571 A.D. Konstantin Ireček investigated the Poganovo monastery for a longer period. He went there with a purpose. In 1880 the painter from Tryavna Tzane Simeonov tells him long stories about its beauties and the Bulgarian monuments, preserved there in the long years of the oppression, when many Bulgarian ancient monuments and documents were ruthlessly destroyed and taken to foreign countries. He tells him of an old monument on which he managed to decipher the names of many of the Bulgarian kings. Soon after this conversation, as early as 1883, Konstantin Ireček goes to the Poganovo monastery, finds the list of names well preserved and copies it. The inscription is on an ordinary wooden slate – 45 cm long and 20 cm wide. The surface is divided into two columns by a vertical line. In the left column, which is divided horizontally into three sections, are written the names of the Bulgarian kings and in the right – the names of the monks

Meta Petrov. *The Musician Gencha*







*Teachers from Tzaribrod in front of the church in the town of Shipka, 1965*

of the monastery. This List was written, judging by the form of the letters, as Ireček himself estimates, around the 17th c. Sima Sokolov from Trun told him that some years ago he himself took to Belgrade a copy of the names of the Bulgarian kings from the Poganovo monastery. This copy he gave to the Bulgarian writer Dobri Voinikov who was there and he, in his turn, gave it to the exarchy in Constantinople. Ireček presumes that the inscription on the wooden plate in the Poganovo monastery is a reproduction of exactly this copy made by some of the monks in the monastery to make it public for Bulgarian science immediately after the Liberation, i.e. two centuries later. He couldn't find any other traces of the inscription but publishes the names of the Bulgarian kings from the List that became famous as "The Poganovo List of Names", the way they were written:

*"Bless, oh G(od) king  
Costadin  
Bless, of G(od) also Boril the king.  
Simeon the king.  
Peter the king. Roman  
Samoil the king.  
Radomir the king. Assen the king.  
Peter the king. Boril the king.  
Alexander the king.  
Costadin the king.  
Simeon the king.*

*Kouman ruler the king.  
Teretia the king.  
Teodor the king.  
Tertia the king's son.  
Alexander the king.  
Assen the king.  
Stratzimir the king.  
The ruler Vladislav.  
His brother.  
Stefan the king the  
Ruler.  
Stratzimir the king.  
Costadin.  
Assen the king.*

Ireček is not content with the study of the Name List of Bulgarian kings and he investigates in detail the Poganovo monastery. He has left a valuable description of it of 1883, with the Bulgarian monuments in it, the old frescos and inscriptions from 1500. In this way they were documented for Bulgarian history in the state in which they were immediately after the Liberation, irrespective of the eventful life of the region and some later interpretations:

"The Poganovo monastery is situated in a beautiful place, like Vlasi, in a miniature forest valley between enormous rocks. At first sight one cannot see where a person can get out into the open from this secluded place... Only





Meta Petrov. *The Old Gymnasium*

Father Superior lives there, the good and talkative monk Vassil. His brother, who has settled here with his family, helps him with the work. By the supplementary buildings of the monastery, several stone arches with wooden ceilings, there is an ancient church. At first sight it reminds us vividly of the Stanimaka (Assenovgrad) settlement: a nice building made of three layers of brick and a layer of stone, about 18 steps long and 7 steps wide. There is a small rectangular tower above the narthex of the church. The church is triconchal. In addition to the altar apse, there are also two other semicircular apses on the sides of the small windows. Above it rises a dome on a construction with eight small windows, through which the faint light sneaks into the darkness inside. On the floor, covered with brick, I discerned several discs of baked clay with leaf ornaments. To this building was added in more recent times an open courtyard, supported by columns.

The carefully painted wall frescos on dark background are very interesting. They reach up to the dome. They are not very well preserved but we know when they were made. The inscription above the door of the church tells us that the paintings were made, it is not said by whom and for whom, in October 1500. The other inscription in the iconostasis mentions the painting of 1512. (Between the saints Constantin and Elena, and St. John the Divine are painted St. Ivan Rilsky, Joachim of Sarandopor, St. Simeon of Serbia, St. Sava and others). On the outside, into the wall of the façade, are built three stone discs on which are cut

the names of St. John the Divine, "Master Constantine" and "Mistress Elena". The name of St. John and Constantine is repeated also on the middle columns of the windows on the sides. There is no doubt that these names indicate the founders – the plate itself may be older or more recent – some south Slavic princes. The tradition identified them with Emperor Constantine the Great and his mother who was really born in these places, near Nish. Of the secondary buildings, the kitchen completely resembles the kitchens of our (i.e. European) castles: an arch of brick and stone, which goes up into a high chimney, marked by a hundred-year old smoke, as if enameled. We can notice a part of an inscription, which mentions the year, the month and the sun cycle, if I have read it correctly – 7085 of the Creation – 1577 A.D."

The Schkorpil brothers decipher the year in the inscription as 1575, i.e. two years earlier. Ireček also describes the Name List that he had published earlier and adds that the small slate of wood on which are inscribed the names of the Bulgarian kings, was once part of a two-winged icon and the names of the kings, written there, were taken from the same source as those on the Boyana monument (the Boyana church). And what is very important, during his visit, i.e. in 1883, the Name List was still read during service before the worshippers from Tzaribrod who visited this place and handed over the legends of the ancient Bulgarian history:

"The Name List is still read during service on holidays



– Ireček goes on. There were many manuscripts since, people say, it has never been deserted. But in our century (i.e. the 19th c.), they were taken away by private persons. I found only 9 books, all containing religious texts. (Among them were manuscripts from the 15th c. The Serbs took away five manuscripts during the occupation of 1877–1878). The region must have been populated since ancient times. The Father Superior showed me some coins found while digging in the monastery garden. They belong to Julius Caesar (with an elephant), Aurelian, Constantine, Justinian, Byzantine coins, Bulgarian silver coins of king Assen, etc.”.

I dwelled in more detail on the description of the

Poganovo monastery made by Konstantin Ireček because he has registered the state of this mediaeval Bulgarian monument and the attitude towards it of the local people very soon after the Liberation. Comparing what I saw or heard then with my experience a century later, in 1999, I visited the monastery and for a long time tried to discern the inscriptions about which I had only read.

As is visible from the royal monument published above, it contains the names of Bulgarian kings only although there are some mistakes and their arrangement does not always follow the chronology of events. There is not a single Serbian ruler and this indicates, as its analysts note, that the List has been copied from the Bulgarian original



*Visiting  
Rila Monastery, 1999*

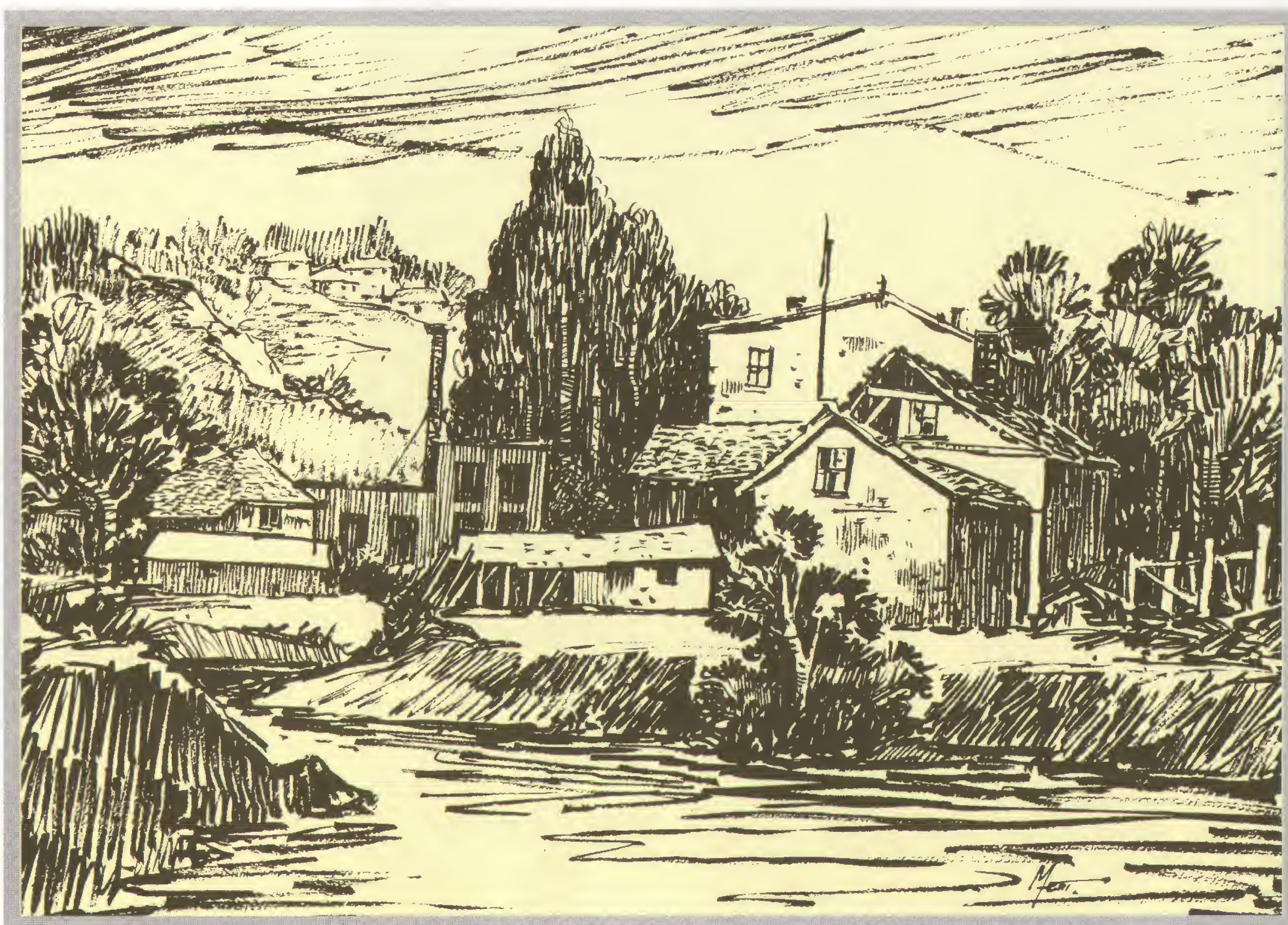


and that those who read and heard about it were Bulgarians. This is why quite a number of Bulgarian scholars managed, in the first years after it became popular and later, to complete their studies and to publish them. It suffices to mention K. Miyatev who wrote a book about the Poganovo monastery and it was later published by the Tzaribrod society "Nishava" in Sofia; and Andrei Grabar who publishes the article "The Poganovo monastery" in *Papers of the Bulgarian Institute of Archeology*. In it one can find reproductions of the frescos; or professor Bogdan Filov who interpreted the Poganovo inscriptions in several of his works.

Many are the questions that Bulgarian historians have to answer in connection with the "discovery" of the Poganovo monastery. Some of the answers of older times have undergone development and have found confirmation in other monuments in Bulgarian lands. But there are also such, like the first conclusion of Ireček or those of Miyatev that will always be quoted: "In this modest building are hidden real masterpieces of murals that have primary importance for Balkan art. It is true that the Poganovo murals are not the first that are free of Byzantine tradition and are not the first to reflect the naturalistic tendencies of the new time. But on the other hand they are the first to discard the old chains, to open their doors wide for the new forms of the early Renaissance. In this sphere the

murals from Poganovo are much ahead of those in Athos and they have stolen their fame during the time of the Turkish oppression. In their iconography and style the Poganovo murals stand alone among the other Serbian, Macedonian and Bulgarian monuments of the same period. They are the artistic product of an individual art which unfortunately has not found its followers elsewhere in Bulgaria so that we can speak of a Bulgarian Renaissance in art". Since the time when Miyatev studies the murals and the inscriptions in the Poganovo monastery the number of Bulgarian monuments and murals of the Middle ages and the architecture of the Revival has grown considerably. Many monuments of great value were discovered but this does not diminish the value of the murals in the monastery "St. John the Precursor" and their importance for Bulgarian culture and church painting in the transition between Middle ages and the Revival. Unfortunately we must say that this exceptional interest of Bulgarian and foreign historians in the monuments of the Poganovo monastery remains mainly their own concern. When Miyatev visits again the monastery, only two or three months before it was handed over to Yugoslavia together with Tzaribrod and the nearby villages, the monastery is empty and looks forsaken like the whole of the Tzaribrod region. "The Poganovo monastery met the liberation of Bulgaria poor and forgotten. After performing its historical mission, like the Tzaribrod region as

Meta Petrov. *The Railway Station and Nishava river*







*The Poganovo Monastery "St. John the Theologist", 14th c.*

a whole, it had to suffer the indifference of that generation. The veteran was left without control by the Church authorities... When we visited the monastery in 1920, there was nobody there. The monastery yard was deserted and quiet and the church was empty, a dusty and deplorable building". And yet some of the valuable monuments were saved and kept in the National Museum in Sofia.

The fact is that in the years after the Liberation the Poganovo monastery attracted very often the attention of the biggest figures of Bulgarian historiography, to a much greater extent than other valuable monuments of Bulgarian Middle ages. Despite its modest size and lack of fame, in the eyes of the Bulgarians it stands immediately after historical and archeological sites like Tzarevetz in Veliko Turnovo, the Madara Horseman and "St. Naum" monastery in Pliska.

But in 1883 Konstantin Irečeck collects interesting facts about other monasteries and Bulgarian monuments round Tzaribrod. From the Poganovo monastery he starts for the village of Odorovtzi above which, on the right bank of the river, on a high rock, is situated the settlement of Yassenovo kale. The fortress wall, one to two meters thick and made of cut stone pieces, surrounds a rectangular space. Each of the sides is 40 m long. The fortress has a reservoir. It was shone to him from the opposite peak of the Rui Mountain. Across the fortress, on the right bank of the river, were found the ruins of an old monastery – the Odorovo monastery. The legend told by the local people in Odorovtzi claimed that the fortress was taken by the Turks on Easter,

when the soldiers had gone to the service in the monastery church, as the tradition required of the Bulgarian army. The Turks learned this military catch from "an old woman". Here Irečeck obviously got wrong what the person said. Probably what was meant was not "an old woman" but "a babà" (with the stress on the second syllable), a leader of a Muslim order. To them are usually attributed the atrocities of the Turks during the great Christian holidays. After that the Turks, again according to the legend, destroyed the Odorovo monastery inhabited by 70 monks because they attacked and robbed the Turkish treasury, which was traveling in these places from Nish to Samokov. The Bulgarian peasants even pointed at the rock from which, after the robbery, were thrown the people and the mules.

Local legends and stories often mix up events and heroes. In the same way here the legend has attributed untypical behavior to the pious monks of the Odorovo monastery. But in the same time it reproduces correctly, though mistaken in the chronology, events from the past since many of the fortresses here were destroyed during the Ottoman oppression and until recently the roads presented surprises to everyone who transported any goods, to say nothing of a "treasury". The people of Odorovtzi and the neighboring villages connect the Yassenovo kale fortress with the Bulgarian king Assen and interpret it as "Assenovo kale". Irečeck mentions rightly that the name of the fortress probably originates from the village of Yassen dol situated near by and it reminded him rather of the tree yassen 'ash tree' than of Assen. This hardly convinced the local people





Meta Petrov. *Gatzina Tavern*

who would try to prove that Yassenov dol also originates from king Assen because the Name List in the Poganovo monastery contains his name and the Father Superior reads it clearly on very holiday. This unequal etymological dispute between the scholar and the villagers of Odorovtzi and Poganovo has a more serious aspect. It demonstrates the unchanged Bulgarian national consciousness of the local population and a remarkable historical memory in which are interwoven legends and stories but also the real names of Bulgarian rulers.

By a small brook coming from the village of Zvontzi they showed him a warm mineral spring from which, as the legend goes, people carried stones when they were building the fortress, connected in the minds of the local people with king Assen. Between the villages of Zvontzi and Iskrovtsi there were remains of an old bridge, called Kovatchev bridge, a pebbled road and some dilapidated building. Above Ribni dol too, the upper valley of the Poganov river, there were remains of an old fortress. Some time ago they found there a stone plate with "three loaves of bread" depicted on it. There are not many such cases in archeological practice – to find plates with the depictions of bread. Rather the peasants saw images of ancient tombstones or signs of the sun, slightly deleted by time. Contemporary anthropologists would immediately announce that they had found remnants of some very old sanctuary, open altars or solar discs of sun worshippers.

But for the poor and tortured Bulgarian peasant from the Tzaribrod region the first thing was to see bread – a thought very far from sensation but very close to survival.

The people of the small town of Tzaribrod in the 1880s pronounced its name rather as Tzarev-brod "king's brod", again a memory of the time of the kings. There, according to the legends they told, all travelers had to pay "royal pass fee". Tzaribrod, as we noted above, is often mentioned as a place where the traveling tradesmen and various missions from Europe to the Sublime Port and back, often remained to rest or sleep over night but the village itself was on the hill and was almost invisible from the road. Here, where they usually stopped, there was only a well and fountain, buildings for rest and shelter for the travelers who could get food and supplies from the Bulgarians who came down from the hill.

We can deliberate whether the name of Tzaribrod, Tzarev-brod, as it was pronounced then, had not originated on analogy with the well established practice among Bulgarians to call the main roads "king's roads" ('main road'). It was really situated on the main road from Belgrade to Sofia, Ederne and Constantinople, convenient for crossing the Nishava River, called here, along its upper reaches, Malka Nishava.

Near Tzaribrod Ireček heard of another very interesting name of the flint crystals that the local Bulgarians called "God's arrow" and they claimed that they fell from the sky



with the lightening. The connection between flint stones and lightening appeared very strange to the Czech but he obviously guessed that at that time the Bulgarians still started the fire and lighted their cigarettes with such flint stones. After this "discovery" he expressed his deep sorrow that he could not remain longer among the Bulgarians in Tzaribrod and to record also other rare and strange names of minerals and plants. But we still have the description of an ancient temple in the village of Lukovitza:

"The dilapidated temple of Lukovitza is an extremely strange building. The church itself is insignificant, only 7 steps long and 5 steps wide, with a semi-circular abscida. The initial brick arch, which is long destroyed, was replaced by the peasants with a wooden roof. Above the church ante-room rises a three-story rectangular tower with its sides 5 steps wide. Its walls are roughly constructed with round river and cut stones among which are pasted horizontal beams. The highest story contained a small chapel, with arch-like rectangular windows along its length and a triangular abscida on the walls of which one can notice frescos. The middle story – only a staircase – has bare walls with two parapets on the sides. The lower space is covered with stones and the walls were decorated with smaller images of saints, diligently painted on dark background in two rows, one above the other. On the scrolls that the saints are holding are seen parts of Old Slavic inscriptions. The faces of the saints are pierced by the Turks. The whole temple seems to have been covered with soil and then unearthed again... Round the ruins are noticed also heaps

of cut stone and remains of a fence. The land between the peak and the brook is so narrow that the tower can hardly serve for defense. There are no legends about the past of this building, which, as a combination of the tower with the entire temple, is very rare in Eastern architecture. A peasant who opened the church for us said that his grandfather was 120 years old. Usually people in villages like to increase the age of people. He said he didn't know when this church was in action. The people came here on Mitrov day". We can judge from the words of the man who took care of the church that it was dedicated to Saint Dimiter since Mitrov Day (Dimitrov day) was its patron's day. The people from the village and the neighborhood came here every year to give homage to the Christian saint and the silent ruins, witnesses of dark and fearful times – times when people built high towers to survive and churches, hidden in the ground that preserved miraculously Slavic letters and words from Old Bulgarian inscriptions.

Pavel Deliradev and the historian Ivan Velkov also give information about several ancient monasteries. This is the old church of Berende in the Nishava valley, decorated with frescos since the time of king Assen; the monastery in Razboishte whose church is built "like a cave" in a steep rock; the monastery "St. John" which is supposed to be at about 3 km off Dragoman railway station; ruins of an old church from the 16th c. in Dragoman with remains of old frescos.

We can hardly ever restore the complete picture of Tzaribrod, the monuments – silent witnesses of Bulgarian

*The alumni of the fourth year of the Pedagogic school in Tzaribrod*





antiquity in these parts, the way it was at the time of the restoration of Bulgaria in 1878, what could have been studied and documented for eternity. According to official statistics, prepared at the end of 1880s, about the municipalities and villages all over the country, Tzaribrod has 10 acting monasteries, this being only a provisional list. This is a big enough number to describe the region as one of the remarkable Christian centers of spiritual life in Bulgaria in the Middle ages and the Revival.

“St. Kirik” – Smilovtzi village, Smilovtzi municipality.

“St. Dimiter” – Brebevnitza village, Stanino municipality.

“St. Dimiter” – town of Tzaribrod.

The ratio between the number of monasteries and the villages in Tzaribrod region indicates that one acting monastery corresponds to ten villages. It kept alive the Christian faith and Bulgarian national spirit among the population in the years before the Liberation.

### Monasteries in Tzaribrod region (1900–1901)

“St. John” – Poganovo village, Brezovo municipality. Better known as the “Poganovo monastery”.

“St. Most Holy Mary” – Razboina village, Bukorovo municipality.

“St. Nicholas” – Malo Malovo village, Golyamo Malovo municipality.

“St. Most Holy” – Grapa village, Zhelkyusha municipality.

“St. Nicholas” – Durzhina village, Zhelyusha municipality.

“St. Anastasia” – Nedelishte village, Nedelishte municipality.

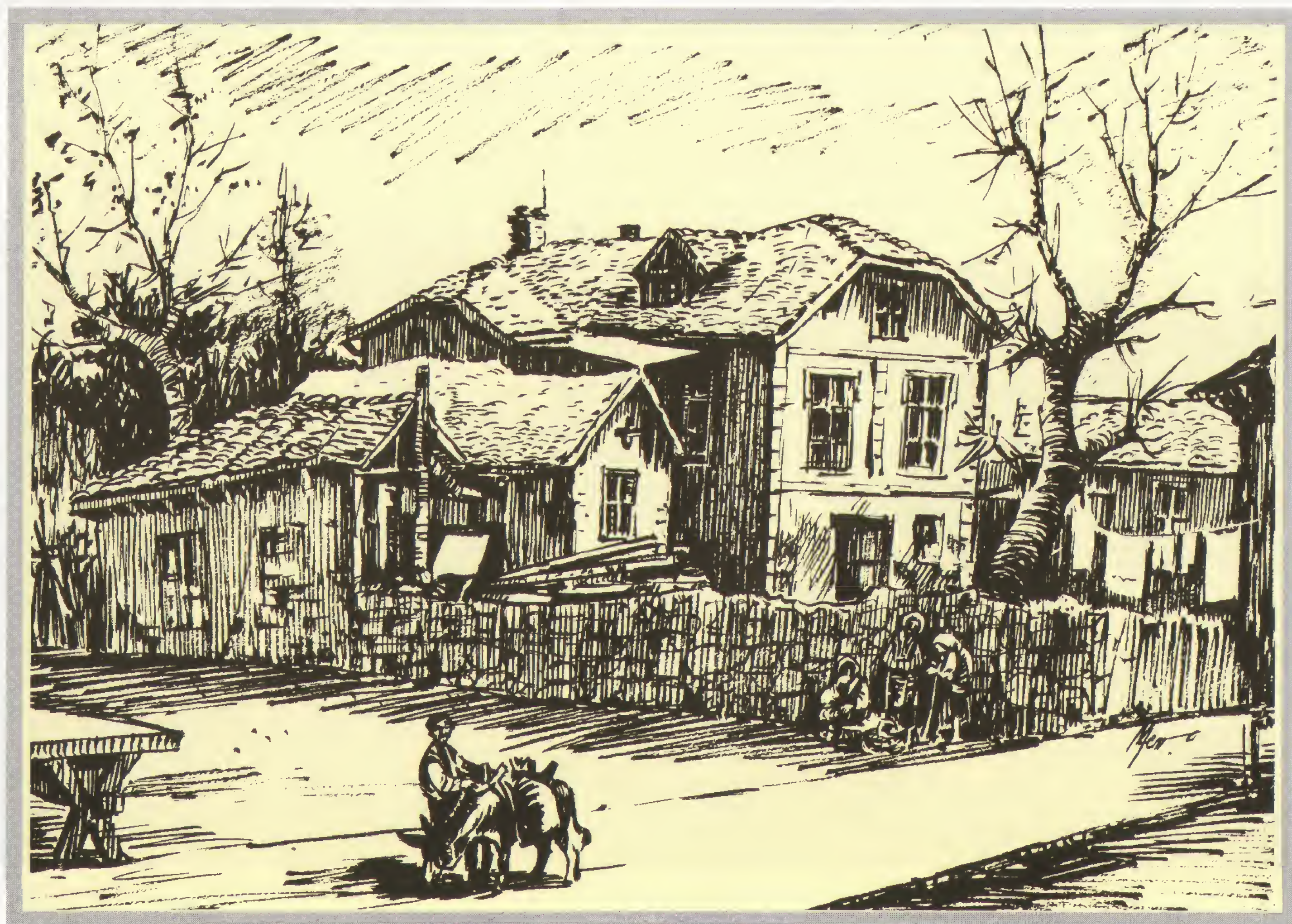
“St. Archangel” – Izatovtzi village, Slavino municipality.

## EDUCATION

Till the Liberation education in Tzaribrod and the region follows the route of Bulgarian enlightenment during the Revival and is achieved thanks to the will, efforts and financial support of the local population. After 1871 it also received the support of the Bulgarian exarchy. After 1878, especially after Tzaribrod becomes an administrative center of the newly established Tzaribrod region, there is a need to establish schools of higher level of education – secondary schools and high schools, which so far existed only in Pirot and Nish.

In 1879 the Sofia district Council of Education appoints

Meta Petrov. *The New Market-Place*





Dimo Petrichev for school inspector in the Tzaribrod region. Under his supervision in the Tzaribrod region are opened primary schools – in the villages of the district. In the autumn of 1880, on the initiative of priest Peter Shishkov and Simeon Hristov from Pirot, the Seminary of Belogradchik moves to Tzaribrod. The students, about 80, and the director S. Hristov pass through Pirot like a military detachment marching and singing. As contemporaries describe the event, the march filled the people of Pirot with enthusiasm “to go and settle in Tzaribrod”. Simeon Hristov is appointed director of the Tzaribrod pedagogical seminary with a two-year course of study, which has the task to prepare educated people for the whole country. The Mayor Kolyo Stoyanov and the population of Tzaribrod meet with satisfaction the seminary, which has 80 students per year and offers the students accommodation in their homes.

The priest Todor Popanastassov offers his home to the students and all people of Tzaribrod mobilize to build the school's boarding house. The building has five classrooms and two smaller rooms – one for a teachers' room, with the specialized collections for the subjects, and the other for the office of the director. The first teachers in the boarding house are Stoyan Ivanov, Georgi Demanchev, Georgi Cholakov, Gr. Gregorov, a Czech, Pundel and the director S. Hristov, who, at the end of 1884, leaves the boarding house and the town due to “conflicts with the staff”. He is replaced by Ivan Filipov. The new teachers L. Deyanov and P. Zubev are appointed. After the school year of 1883/1884 the pedagogical seminary is closed because new pedagogical schools with four-year term of study are opened in the Principality of Bulgaria.

A secondary school is opened in Tzaribrod too. When

on August 25, 1883 Konstantin Ireček visits Tzaribrod, he notes that there is a state three-level school there. According to the history of education in Tzaribrod, the third level was adopted much later – in 1900. Ireček visits Tzaribrod during the summer vacation of the students and teachers. It is possible that the start of the third level was already prepared but it was not a fact yet. The dramatic events that followed in the autumn of 1885 no doubt postpone this acquisition so desired by the people of the region since, as we learn, even in 1900 the start of the third level was problematic without the decisive actions of the director Doncho Paunin. The story is very amusing, especially told in the words of the contemporaries. At that time obligatory schooling in Bulgaria covered four years and to introduce higher levels of education special requirements existed for the minimal number of students. To start the third class of the Tzaribrod secondary school in the 1900/1901 school year they needed one student. Paunin learned somehow that one student, the son of a priest, was enrolled to study in Berkovitza and wrote a threatening letter to his father with the following content: “Reverend, you will send your boy here so that we can start the third class. Otherwise you are banned from entering Tzaribrod. We don't want that Berkovitza takes pride in our people!” This is how the third class was organized in the Tzaribrod secondary school. Later it bears the name of Tzaribrod three-class popular school, and still later – secondary school, which survived until 1914.

The whole population of the town, especially the more prominent citizens like Peter Simov, Georgi Minov, Doncho Igov and Todor Minov Burzak, provide substantial material support for the school. With personal donations from many

*People of Tzaribrod in the 1930s*







Meta Petrov. *The Little Monastery*

citizens in Tzaribrod is built a school building, which was preserved till 1947.

The curriculum of the Tzaribrod secondary school in 1900 includes the subjects: religion, Bulgarian, French, Russian, arithmetic, geometry, pedagogy, general history, Bulgarian history, geography, chemistry, natural history, domestic economics, Darwin, calligraphy, singing, gymnastics and handwork. 20 subjects altogether of which 12 in primary school. The secondary school attracted many students from the neighboring villages and keeps them in the region.

The Tzaribrod primary school "Hristo Botev" supports the functioning of the primary schools in the whole region. For example, in the first days of September 1909, on the first school day, it distributed the school aids sent by the Sofia district school inspectorate, among the schools in the villages Borovo, Dolna Nevlya, Dragoman, Poganovo, Kruvenitza, Godech, Shouma, Golyamo Malovo, Vlasi, Goin dol, Durzhina, Lukovitza, Kalotina, Chepurlintzi, Bulkovia, Gubesh, Dolni Krivodol, Komshtitza, Vishan, Vladislavtzi, Izatovtzi, Nedeliste, Chekanetz, Slavina, Senokos, Odorovtzi, Peturlash, Radeina, Smilovtzi, Tuden, Kamenitza, Vrabcha, Milkovtzi and Filipovtzi. This long list of villages shows actually the number of primary village schools in the district at that time. At the opening of the school year (1909/1910) the head teacher reports that, as different from previous

years when enrollment at schools began not earlier than September 20 and schooling did not begin before Dimitrov day, now enrollment began much earlier and the school year would start on September 1. The school buildings are renovated and all positions for teachers are occupied, i.e. all necessary conditions for a normal and successful school year are there. The work of the teachers in Tzaribrod and the region is permanently in the center of attention of the public, their behavior and private life is under scrutiny, it is discussed in the local press and in coffee shops as heatedly and pungently as that of the most famous public figures in the Bulgarian capital.

At the ceremony for the end of the school year for the primary schools in Tzaribrod on Petrov day the head teacher reads the usual year report before the community of parents and citizens of the town. Many songs and recitals of poems follow. Here is the reaction of one of those present: "The report of the head teacher Mr. Durtanchev was full of some numbers of enrolled students, of school dropouts, students moved to other schools, those who stayed down and those who would have to resit for the examination. Then we listened to a lecture on education and the temperament of children. We, the parents, wanted to know why the percentage of the drop outs in one class is greater than another and not about the "temperament" and other such words from pedagogical textbooks.



We didn't want to know about "phlegmatic" or "melancholic" and all that crap. Not phrases and words, Mr. Teacher. We want action!" The tone of the anonymous parent grows even sharper when he criticizes the students' performance in which the sad songs prevailed: "Characteristic of the children's performance was the sorrow in some of the songs. They sang the song of the "Widow", of the "Worker" and so on. It is strange why teachers spread among the children such melancholy and sorrowful feelings. Don't worry, teachers, time shall come when life will put on these future citizens the stamp of melancholy and sorrow!" The parent or at least the supposed parent as the author of this material presented himself, obviously does not share the leftist ideology popular at that time among the young teachers in Tzaribrod. What is more, the town discusses the representation of Tzaribrod by Vassil Slivkov at the IV Teachers' Congress of Social Democrats that took place in Sofia in 1909. A teachers' social democratic organization is set up in the town, which is very active, co-initiates the teachers' social democratic conference, organizes meetings, sends appeals for improving the material status of teachers and so on. The number of teachers in the district is considerable and they represent a well-organized social group. In 1909 there are on the territory of Tzaribrod region 78 schools with 64 male teachers and 51 female teachers (115 teachers altogether), who teach 4349 students (3153 boys and 1196 girls).

It is notable that the number of the girls is twice as small as that of the boys. Obviously in the already mention 1909 only half of the girls visited school. Of the 78 school buildings in the district only 18 are newly built and answer the requirements. The rest are situated in old buildings resembling the old self-instruction schools. The public criticizes the municipality on that. The latter is responsible by the acting legislation and a decision of the people's Assembly of 1906, which approves a loan of 8 million Bulgarian leva for the municipalities for building schools. But we cannot disregard the achievements in this border district. In the same year on September 1 was opened a private school in Milin Kamuk street № 1, under the supervision of Miss M. G. Antonova. The girls, who enrolled in that school, as we read in the announcement, will produce women's and children's clothes for a modest pay. At that time there are also some changes in the Church activities in the eparchy. The acting vicar Cyril is recalled and in his place is appointed the priest from Tzaribrod Archangel Poprangelov.

In 1910 the District Council takes a decision to take a loan of 1.5 million leva to build new schools in the district and to repair the old ones. The district school inspector Todorov and the director of the Tzaribrod secondary school Lekov insist before the District Council in Tzaribrod that it is highly necessary to build at least one new private school and a new room in the secondary school. Because of the

The first issue of the Tzaribrod newspaper Nishava, June 4, 1915

Год. IV **В 2176**

Царибродъ, Сѣбота 4 Юлий 1915 год.

Брой 1.

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**Годишенъ абонаментъ**  
**4 лева.**

ОБЯВЛЕНИЯ И РЕКЛАМИ  
по споразумѣние.

боя 5 ст.  
рѣчна продажба.

# НИШАВА

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Всичко що се отнася до в-ка:  
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## Малка историйка

### На царибродската Непълна Смѣсена Гимназия.

1880/81—1914/15 год.

Сегашната непълна смѣсена гимназия въ гр. Царибродъ е прѣминала прѣзъ три важни момента на своето развитие—1880/81, 1890/91 и 1914/15 учебни години.

Прѣзъ есенъта, въ 1880 година, когато днешниятъ градъ е ималъ видъ на село и е броятъ само около

никъ Тодоръ п. Анастасовъ прѣдлага съобщения си домъ на ученицитъ, а други се заематъ съ постройката на сданието за държавенъ пансионъ—сегашното такова на непълната смѣсена гимназия.

Тогавашниятъ видъ на сданието е изглеждалъ по-малко

на учебното дѣло въ такива провинционални краища знае се, се дължи до голѣма степенъ на инициативата на самия директоръ.

И наистина, както що за главенъ инициаторъ по откриване на държавния пансионъ тукъ може да се смѣта директора му Симионъ Христовъ, прѣзъ първиятъ периодъ на историята на това училище, така и прѣзъ вториятъ такъвъ Дончо Пауниъ е инициатора по откриване и 3-й класъ. По-неже не е имало достатъчно

национално обвѣдение, а и за заграбване чуждото, за прѣтопване чисто българско население въ Сръбско "вѣрую," Подвзе се тази идея на часа отъ цѣлото гражданство и, само слѣдъ нѣколко дена, натоварената за тази цѣль комисия отъ: директора на училището Георги п. Николовъ, Архирейски намѣстникъ Свещеникъ Арахангелъ п. Стаменовъ, Градския Кметъ Костадинъ Поповъ, Преседателя на училищното настоятелство Ал. А. Врѣдловски, Народния



growing number of students in the secondary school in the same year, 8 new male teachers and 3 female teachers are appointed. The director D. Lekov taught history and geography, G. Alexov taught Bulgarian language and history, Evstaty Popov taught arithmetic, Mateev taught natural history, Iliev – Bulgarian language, Bezlov – music, M. Georgiev – gymnastics, Vassev – geometry, Miss Georgieva taught French, Miss Aprilova – history, religion, handwork and calligraphy and E. Georgieva taught geography and religion.

In the beginning of 1911 among the teachers spreads the idea and a decision is taken that the Tzaribrod three-level school is called “Evstaty Pelagonyisky”. As a bishop sent by the Exarchy to Pirot, he has done much for the development of Bulgarian education and the Bulgarian Church for the Nishava Bulgarians and more specifically those in the Nishava Eparchy. He wrote the letter of the people of Pirot to the Headquarters in San Stefano with the request to remain within the borders of Bulgaria. After that he was expelled by the Serbian authorities. Soon after the decision was taken, the *Nishava* newspaper publishes an article by an author known only with his initials M. V. Without disregarding the achievements of the Bulgarian bishop of Pirot Evstaty Pelagonyisky, he proposes that the Tzaribrod school bears the name of the no less prominent, in his opinion, Bulgarian teacher Hristo Passarev (Daskal

Risto), who set the foundations of the school in Pirot that until 1878 worked with the curriculum of the Plovdiv school. The motivation for this proposal is remarkable not only for the deeds of Daskal Risto but rather with a feeling of commonality with the fate of the Bulgarians from Pirot in the pre-Liberation period. The people of Tzaribrod, no matter whether their parents or they themselves were born in Tzaribrod, are still searching for the symbolic names of their patriotism in the past spiritual and educational center – the town of Pirot. “In our opinion – it is said in the arguments – the person who must be honored with this and whose name must remain in history, who was the Father Paisiy of Pirot, who educated the highest officials of our country, is Daskal Risto. But let us bring more arguments. Who discarded “azi, buki, vedi and so on”, which were learned only marginally? Who founded the primary schools – one for boys and one for girls, and created a four-level school? Who created a school about which we can only talk with sadness? Who began the evening courses for the craftsmen so that they can learn to read and write? Who brought back the day of Saints Cyril and Methodius? Who introduced the church singing that made old and young go to church and understand true religious education? Who sang patriotic songs presented as love songs? Who introduced the slave game risking his life telling the participants that the person acting the slave was

Meta Petrov. *The Old Fountain*







*Wedding-guests in front of Tzar Simeon café in Brebevnitza village*

Bulgaria? Let us see who will liberate her. Even more, do the respectable citizens know about the coming of Vassil Levsky to Pirot and who was the person with whom he wrote a letter to the central Committee in the watermill of Hadji Viden? I can say: "This is Daskal Risto". The name of Daskal Risto warmed the Bulgarian heart of the people of Pitor and even today it still warms the hearts of the people of Pirot and Tzaribrod. He was the leader of the Bulgarian town of Pirot... It suffices to say that the history of the Bulgarian town of Pirot (must) write with gold letters the name of Daskal Risto. After he was expelled from Pirot by the Serbs, all the intelligent people migrated to Bulgaria and the middle class created our town of Tzaribrod prospering today. Saying this, I want to hear the opinion of those who took the decision to name our school "Evstatiy Pelagoniysky?"

A month later the same question is raised again in the newspapers *People's voice* and *Daily*, reminding of the good idea of the people of Tzaribrod to name the secondary school "Evstatiy Pelagoniysky" – a former bishop of Pirot during the Turkish oppression and after the war exiled and expelled by the Serbs. This proposal was accepted by the citizens of Tzaribrod on the insistence of his associate Manciple priest Peter Shishkov. "As for the achievements of the bishop in the struggle against the Serbs – the author goes on in the second newspaper – those of Avramacha

are greater. The bishop died in his eparchy as a bishop and Avramacha died an outcast in the streets of Sofia, driven away from his native home by the Serbs." It is true that this was the life and destiny of many of the old patriots after the Liberation no matter where they were driven away from – Pirot or Braila.

Soon comes the end of the school year and the discussion is forgotten. On June 26, 1911 in the theater hall is read a report on the activity of the two primary schools in Tzaribrod. The report is given by the head teacher Hristo Ahchiysky. On June 29 is given the year report of the Tzaribrod secondary school. The hall of the school, where the director D. Lekov reads the report, is full of students and people. The 23 teachers are also present. After the event 24 certificates for completed secondary level of education are handed to the students. Of them 4 are very good, 3 are fair and the rest are good.

Very soon after the end of the school year a young man from Tzaribrod, at that time a university student, raises on the pages of a Tzaribrod newspaper the central question of opening a high school – at least with five classes. As a very serious argument he presents the fact that near by, in Pirot, there is a perfect full high school and he asks the natural question: "Why shouldn't we have one too?" He appeals through the newspaper to the two people's representative from Tzaribrod one of whom was at that time a minister, to





Meta Petrov. *Dudina Neighborhood*

prove in practice that “they are not only giving promises but they also fulfill them”. He ends with the benefits for all people of Tzaribrod from such an educational institution:

“The existence of a five-class high school in our town, which is the center of a large district, will create opportunities for it to make a big step in cultural advancement.”

As a minor response to this appeal appears the news that in the autumn of the new school year three new schools will be opened in the Tzaribrod district, in the villages Pracha, Manaf chiflik and Vurdolovtzi. On October 2 in Tzaribrod is organized the district teachers’ meeting at which is presented a report by the old board of trustees and a new board is appointed, headed by Kocho Ivanov, deputy H. Ahchiysky, secretary A. Goranova and librarian E. Videnov.

One or two years have to pass until the idea of increasing the number of classes in the Tzaribrod secondary school leads to the creation of a sold public committee, which elects a delegation to the Ministry of Education. It must insist on the introduction of the first high school level. The delegation consists of many influential people in the town: the people’s representative Michail Karaleev, the Vicar priest Archangel Popstamenov, the mayor Konstantin Popov, the head of the school board of trustees A. Vurdolovsky, the director of the school Georgi Popnikolov, the teachers H. Z. Kiradziev and Kamen Kolev. This delegation substantiates its arguments by offering a material guarantee for the financial support of the school given by

the citizens Peter Simov, Georgi Minov, Doncho Igov and Todor Manov. During the talks they manage to convince the Ministry to take the respective measures. This leads to the adoption by the XVII Ordinary National Assembly, in its session on July 12, 1914, of the “Decree for opening high school classes at some incomplete high schools and some full secondary schools and for the development of secondary and high schools into full high schools”. Article 1 of this Decree with such a long title sanctions the opening of the first level class at the Tzaribrod high school. And on September 1, 1914, i.e. for the new 1914/1915 school year, in Tzaribrod is opened the first high school level with two classes and 69 students (50 boys and 19 girls), the overall number of students in the school in that year being 407 of whom 293 are boys and 114 are girls. There are 5 male teachers, 9 female regular teachers and 8 part time teachers. On the same day the school was renamed to Tzaribrod Incomplete Co-educational High School.

There were 12 directors in the Tzaribrod school until the opening of the first high school level. Each one of them gave his contribution to the education in the town: Simeon Hristov, Ivan Filipov, Jordan Naumov, Doncho Paunin, Hristo Styanov, Zosim Atanassov, Dimiter Ekimov, Eftim Enfandziev, Peter Dimitrov, Panayot Manoc, D. Lekov, and Georgi Nikolov.

The same year the first director of the Tzaribrod



Incomplete Co-educational High School makes a proposal to the Ministry of Education to open a second level and transform the school into Full Co-educational High School. "Looking into the past – says the appeal addressed to his followers and the notables of the town – they must remove all obstacles, of course aided by the state, and realize one day the idea for the foundation of a full high school in this border district. This educational and cultural unit must unite the whole region that is truly Bulgarian – Pirot, Nish and Vrana".

During the two school years, coinciding with the raging war in which Bulgaria is an active participant on many fronts, the educational activities in Tzaribrod do not stop.

Statistics shows that during the 1916/1917 school year in the Tzaribrod incomplete high school there were 460 students in 12 classes and in the next 1917/1918 years there were 427 students in 11 classes to which must be added 30 private students.

The years of WW I, 1915–1918, brake the normal conditions of life and make the functioning of the school very difficult, not only in Tzaribrod but in the whole of the country as well. There is lack of food, fuel, part of the teachers and the elder students are mobilized. Some go as volunteers, as during the Balkan War, because in this war too Bulgaria participates in the name of national ideals, to



*Old city architecture  
in Tzaribrod*



achieve impossible goals, to correct injustices imposed on it by the peace treaties backed by the Great Powers.

Due to the war, during the 1917/1918 school year, in the Tzaribrod high school curriculum are included the subjects Russian and natural history as well as some technical subjects. In the same year director of the school is H. Karadzov and secretary M. R. Michailova. Many of the teachers fight in the war. At the fronts there are also students from the upper grades, probably as volunteers. Iliya Borrovsky from Tzaribrod, for example, enters an application to the director, to postpone the examination of his son Kroum Iliev, since he was wounded at the front and was still in hospital. In September 22 the teachers' council considers more applications of students who were late to enroll since their fathers were at the front and they had to care for the work in the fields and couldn't manage to enroll on time. On September 15 the teachers' council discusses the status of orphans from the war and makes lists of students affected by the war so that they can enroll without paying taxes, following the circular letter of the Ministry of Education. To support the orphans from the war the school organizes on February 19, 1918 a ball the money from which will be added to a "poor students" fund. The school also organizes private examinations for students who had come back from the front.

In 1918/1919 the director of the Tzaribrod high school is A. N. Vulkadinov. The teachers I. Dimitrov, H. Lozev, N. Bairov and K. Michailov are mobilized and go to the front. The teachers' council takes a decision and in December 1918 admits all boys and girls who have arrived from Morava and have applied.

The new school year of 1918/1919 begins with great restrictions of the expenses, some of the classrooms are without heating and classes are held in two shifts. Many of the students have no winter clothes and shoes. The teachers' council addresses the Committee for Social Care in the town for support for the poor students.

After the end of the war and the annexation of Tzaribrod to the Principality of Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia, following the Neuilly Peace Treaty of 1919, the Tzaribrod high school is closed and a year later opened by the Yugoslav authorities under the name of Six-level Full High School.

Meta Petrov. *Cherkez Neighborhood*







Vice President of the Republic of Bulgaria T. Kavaldjiev among representatives of the Helsinki Committee in Tzaribrod, May 6, 2001

## CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

In the period between 1878 and the end of WW I there is no other institution in Tzaribrod except the school and the community center, which take care of cultural activities. To these must be added however some organizations that spring up in different periods on the initiative of representatives of different social groups and professions and to a great extent determine the cultural calendar of the town.

### ACTORS' ORGANIZATION

Founded in August 1888. The aim of this organization, according to its founders, was by means of theatrical performances before the public, to collect money for the formation of a fund. The accumulated money was to be used for opening a library and a community center in Tzaribrod. The citizens of the town approve of the initiative, which has only one defect. The founders of the Actors' Organization have not invited to participate representatives of the so-called "immigrants". Realizing that without them such an initiative will hardly be successful, the board adopts the proposal to make amendments to the statute and attract a broader circle of members and associates for the achievement of the noble goals. The magazine *Domestic teacher*, in its own part, also claims before the public that the goal of the Actors' Organization "is not a

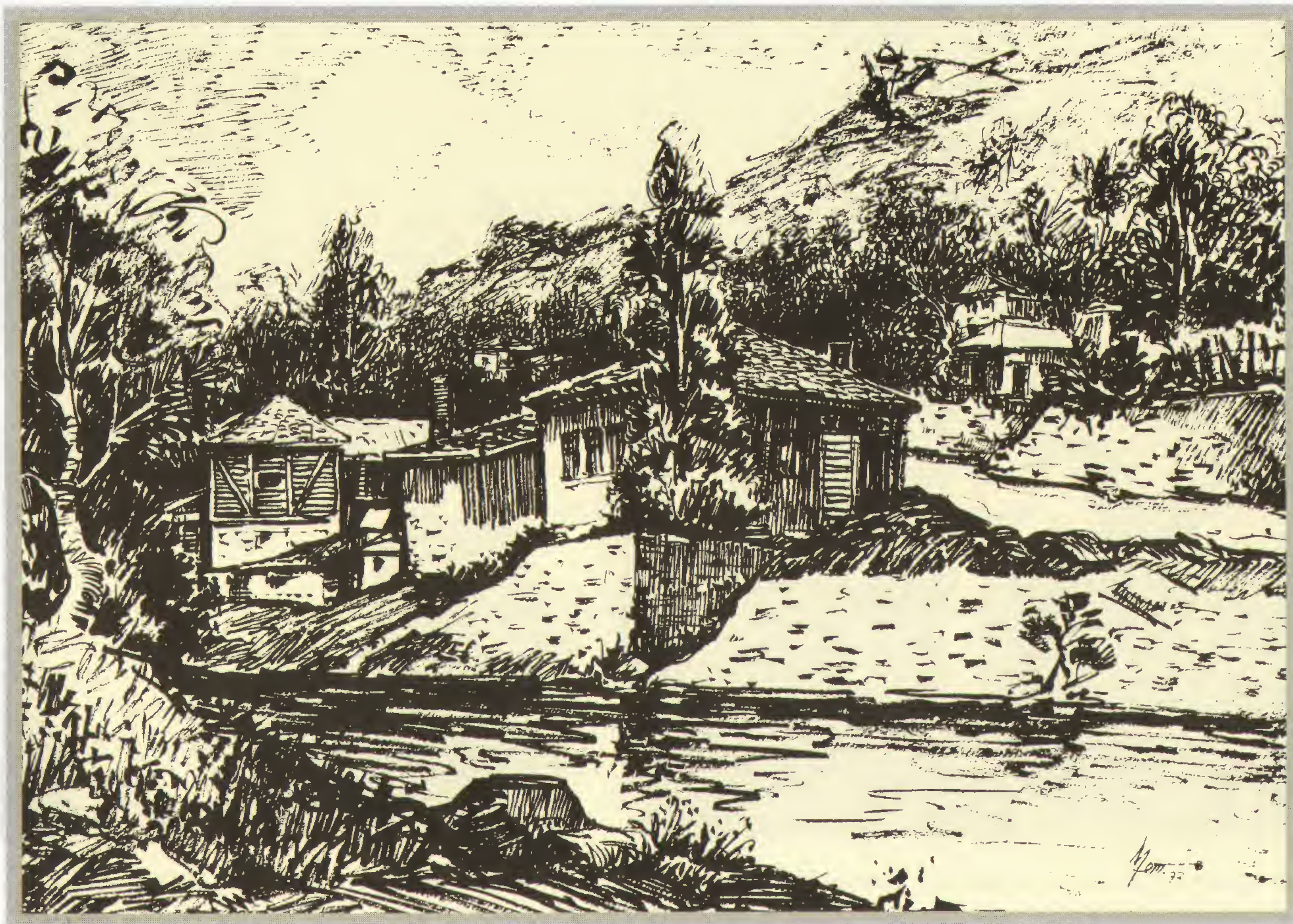
partisan goal but the task to collect some money to open a library in the town". It appeals to the citizens of Tzaribrod "to come and become members of the organization if they want their town to prosper".

The Actors' Organization makes its first successful steps and at the end of the first year after its foundation, i.e. in the middle of 1889, it has five performances as follows: in the first performance are included the drama *Rouska* and the comedy *Evil woman*; in the second – the tragedy *Stefan Karadza* and the comedy *The rich woman*; in the third – the tragedy *Genivieve* and the comedy *The red trousers*; in the fourth – the drama *Ivanko, the murderer of king Assen I*; in the fifth – the same drama and a comedy. At the end of the season the Actors' Organization in Tzaribrod had collected 1000 leva in property: books, actor's clothes and stage property. On the next year the Actors' Organization changes its name to Cultural and educational group "Hristo Botev".

### CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL GROUP "HRISTO BOTEV"

This is an amateur theater in Tzaribrod since 1889, successor of the Actors' Organization, founded in 1888. In 1901 the group prepares and presents to the public three new performances: the plays *Ilya the vevode*, *Karadza* and the comedy *The fat bone*. In the next year is presented still another comedy – *Misunderstanding*. The theatrical group is managed at that time by the teacher Yakimov. The newspaper *Nishava*, in its issue of March 5, 1911, writes that on the next night the new Modern





Meta Petrov. Yovshina Neighborhood

Theater will present *The Golden Fleece* – a drama in three acts by St. Pshibishevsky.

Shortly before the Balkan War of 1912 the organization takes a decision to start a campaign for building a theatre hall. At the moment they use a room, which was once a classroom. It belongs to the community center and is already very inconvenient. The board of trustees decides to elect an initiative committee of influential people called "Committee for building a theatrical hall and a community center in Tzaribrod".

#### GARRISON AMATEUR THEATER

The officers, sergeants and soldiers of the garrison also have their amateur theatrical activities in Tzaribrod. In the end of December 1910 the sergeants from the garrison present in the theater hall of the barracks the play *Ivanko* before a numerous public. As one can learn from the poster in it also participates the actor from Sofia, Mr. Fratev. The responses are very good and the citizens suggest to the sergeants to repeat the performance in the theater of the community center. On the initiative of the officers, on February 5 is organized a ball and a performance for collecting money to make a monument of Nikolay Nikolaevich, brother of the King Liberator, who has great contribution for our liberation. After the performance the public is excited by the speech of Captain Kuzmanov about

Bulgaria after San Stefano. On January 6, 1911 the officers of the reserve from the garrison present in the theater hall the play *Ilyo voevode*.

#### TZARIBROD GYMNASTICS ORGANIZATION "NISHAVA HERO"

Founded in 1898 and functions for 7 years. It has 80 members with whose donations it buys all necessary equipment and office materials. In addition to sports, the organization has cultural activities, which also include theatrical performances. On December 27, 1901 the Tzaribrod Gymnastics Organization performs for the public. The crowded hall supports heatedly the young men who present the play *Ilyo voevode*. The actors are: V. Kirov playing Ilyo voevode, A. Antonov playing the Pasha, T. Manov – Softa, and Tz. Dimitrov – Dervish baba. All are members of the organization.

After the leader of the organization G. Azov was sent to another place its activity declines and in 1904 it stops functioning. The equipment and the documents are lost.

When the All-Slavic Council was held in Sofia, in Tzaribrod is organized a Champions' band of members of the former gymnastics organization. On March 21, 1910 D-r Yanchulev read a lecture in the hall of the community center about the priorities of founding a Gymnastics Champions' Organization. On March 7, 1911 25 people



restore with a new founding meeting the old Tzaribrod organization "Nishava hero". A board of trustees is elected headed by colonel Pachev, his deputy is Lekov, treasurer – M. Hadziev, secretary – N. Mateev. The leader of the organization is M. Georgiev, his deputy is H. Ahchiysky and councilors: A. Vrudlovsky and V. Poptodorov. On April 23, 1911, the Tzaribrod organization "Nishava hero" becomes a regular member of the Bulgarian Gymnastics Union. Its first initiatives are picnics and excursions.

Picnics begin from the end of April. They are organized usually on Sundays to the neighboring villages. They are led by military orchestra, which performs without payment. Two excursions are planned: one to Trun and the other to Piro. Both fail. The first one, because they couldn't provide music, without which the excursions "had no effect". The second failed because of the refusal of the Serbian authorities to let them cross the border, despite the numerous preliminary talks and promises.

With great efforts and money accumulated from membership fees and donations, the organization manages within a few months to prepare public games for May 22 the same year. The diversity of the gymnastic performances is impressive. They are divided into two groups: a) free (ballet, Czech boxing, performances with flags, performances with sticks, performances with rifles, performances with spears, pyramids) and b) competitive (short and long distance running with and without hurdles, long jump, triple jump, rope jumping, weight throwing, weight lifting, muscle

stretching, French wrestling). The games ended with the ceremony of the prizes and a joint national horo dance.

Till the end of the year "Nishava hero" participates actively in all cultural and other events in Tzaribrod and its members appear in complete uniform – at the school holiday Saints Cyril and Methodius, the day of the patron of the local youth organization "Holy Ghost", at the ceremony for receiving school certificates, etc. They also prepare an excursion to Zagreb where on August 25 is organized a congress.

The patron day of the organization is on May 19 and it is commemorated by its members with games and feasts. At the end of 1911 the Tzaribrod organization "Nishava hero" has 132 members. When the chairman and vice chairman colonel Pachev and D. Lekov are sent to serve in Sofia, a temporary chairman is elected – its oldest member.

To the success and popularity of the organization among the population also contribute the publicity of the high goals they set themselves, which are dear to the spirit of the people of Tzaribrod and shared by them. This is how they present their activities in a publication of 1911: "It is our deep belief that we will answer the hopes and will prove that Tzaribrod can be a center of culture... Let the thousands of Bulgarians in Piro, Nish and Vrana see that Bulgaria is prospering and develops along its normal route, that its citizens are not led by any military aspirations. Although the state does not support such initiatives, while



*Frescoes from the Holy Trinity Church in Izvor village*



Serbia offers them financial support, they live and prosper freely”.

#### EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATION “THE YOUTH OF TZARIBROD”

Founded on April 17, 1911 in the hall of the Tzaribrod secondary school. On April 23 they get together again to discuss and adopt a statute prepared by a five-member committee and to elect a board of trustees, which is to manage and lead the organization. The board includes: Iliya G. Slavinsky – chairman, N. Peichev – treasurer, Georgi Tzaribrodsky, Al. Dzadzov, Georgi Slivnishky, Dimitar Atanassov, and Savo Iliev, members. The patron day of the organization is chosen – Holy Ghost. It is commemorated in the same year on May 30, together with the “Nishava hero” organization, with an excursion to the village of Lukovitza. They organize competitions, national dances and take a picture together at the end. “The Youth of Tzaribrod” issues an invitation for the formation of a choir. Those who responded got together on June 8 in the hall of the secondary school, set the day and the hour for rehearsals and on the next day, June 9, they start regular sessions. The choir is directed by H. Hristov – secretary to the Vicar in Tzaribrod. On August 24 the same year the members of the organization meet again at a general meeting to adopt a new statute, which set its goal as “cultural and educational activity”. With a ball on October 1 the educational orga-

nization “The Youth of Tzaribrod” opens the winter entertainment season in Tzaribrod full of theatrical performances and balls. At the first ball the choir of the organization sings “Shumi Maritza” and then follow: a duet accompanied by a guitar, monologue and the comedy *Enyu Planinski*. The main character is performed by G. Antonov, who is known in town as a good comedian. The young people are criticized for the choice of this comedy, which was popular during the years of the Turkish oppression, when our people needed patriotic plays “that would make them laugh and will kindle their patriotism”. The critics claimed that now people need plays, which depict “the present social life”.

#### UNITED TEACHERS’ ORGANIZATION

On October 4, 1909, at a general meeting of the teachers from the whole region, a decision is taken to unite the two existing teachers’ organizations in Tzaribrod – The Teachers’ Union and the Syndicate of Primary School Teachers. The united organization elects its governing body including: chairman Angel Gogov, teacher in Tzaribrod; secretary and treasurer – Vassil Popov, teacher in Kalotina; deputy chairman – Kocho Ivanov, teacher in Vlasi and librarian – Elenko Videnov, teacher in Tzaribrod.

The two organizations keep, irrespective of the unification, their independent life. On March 18, 1912 they present in the hall of the community center a play of a contemporary German playwright Zidermann called *Honor*.

Meta Petrov. Chui Petel Neighborhood







Scene from  
a puppet show

Participants in the play are happy that they have shown to the public for the first time a scene from life in Europe, something “rather different” from all the comedies, farces or patriotic themes, which aimed only at more visitors and higher incomings from tickets. But obviously this was not the general opinion since another group of teachers from the same organization were preparing very soon to show the “colorless” comedy *Madcap*, which contained “neither comedy nor any ideas”.

The teachers set up various organizations, evening and Sunday schools and open practical courses useful for the population.

#### TEACHERS' UNION

An organization of the class teachers in Tzaribrod, which unites with the Syndicate of Primary School teachers in 1909.

#### SYNDICATE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

An organization of the teachers from the primary schools in Tzaribrod region, which unites with the Teachers' Union.

#### TEMPERANCE SOCIETY

On May 25 there appears an announcement-invitation,

signed only with the initials S. N. V., for the foundation of a Temperance Society in Tzaribrod. Enrollment for this society, with which organizations in Tzaribrod grew to 19, is in the office of the *Nishava* newspaper. We don't know whether the society was founded at all and whether it had any activities in Tzaribrod, where there were tens of pubs at the beginning of the 20th c. We know however the text of the invitation for enrollment, which ends in a very naïve way to be convincing: “Forward, kindred souls! Let the British hear that Bulgarians too can be temperate and let the others see in Tzaribrod the blue flag flying!” The foundation of a temperance society at that time is a modern tendency all over Bulgaria and it came from Europe. Often such societies for which there is no context, are simply the cover of political activities”.

#### CYCLING ORGANIZATION “TZARIBROD”

Founded at the beginning of 1912. “On the second day of Easter, which that year fell on March 26, the members of the newly founded Cycling Organization in Tzaribrod, get together at 8 a.m. in front of the club of the organization, all clad in uniforms and everybody with his bicycle. They start in order, but off their bicycles, to the church. After the end of the service they go to “Prince Boris” square where they get in order. Three of them bring from the church a





Meta Petrov. *Upper Platform Neighborhood*

beautiful flag of the organization made of red cloth. It has the form of the cavalry standards, with silver embroidery and "United Cycling Organization 1912 Tzaribrod" written on it. On the other side of the flag there is a falcon, above it is written "Health" and "Strength", and in the lower part – "Fatherland". The cyclist Angel Ivanov held the flag during the whole church service and the people from Tzaribrod who were present remembered it well. After the end of the service the cyclist M. Hadziev makes four steps ahead and makes a moving speech. In it he tries very clumsily to connect sports activities of the organization with military activities: "This century is the century of organizations... Having in mind that every Bulgarian, who cares for his country and the greatness of his fatherland, is a good soldier, the members of this organization, the cyclists, also have the mission in time of war to be the best helpers of their brothers, the soldiers on the battlefield."

On June 16, 1912, 22 members of the organization start for Pirot in full cycling equipment. At the post near Zhelyusha they are met by 9 cyclists from Pirot. In Pirot they organize a demonstration along the main street and stop in front of the hall of the music society "Momchilo". The choir of the society consist of 40 people. During the breakfast Neda Protich from the musical society makes a speech about the unification of the Slavs. They take a picture together and the guests start back for Tzaribrod.

The hosts from Pirot see them off in several carriages 3–4 km out of the town.

#### THE PIROT ORGANIZATION

In 1907 a group of people in Tzaribrod, immigrants from Pirot, get together and form the Pirot Organization. In October 1909 they become members of the Sofia Pirot Bulgarian Charity Organization. According to its statute, its goal is: mutual support of the members, establishing a fund for grants of students from the Pirot region and collecting materials for the history and ethnography of the Pirot region.

#### TZARIBROD TOWN COMMUNITY CENTER

The Tzaribrod community center after the Liberation is the product of the Actors' Organization. The goal of this community center, according to its statute in force from January 1, 1898, is to support the library and the reading room, to organize theatrical performances, literary readings and balls, to organize public lectures and to publish and distribute books with useful contents. It has its own stamp with the inscription "Tzaribrod town community center". The board of trustees of the community center includes: chairman H. Kiradziev, deputy chairman T. Manov, secretary St. Dzadzov, treasurer G. Zlatanov and librarian E. Videnov. In the beginning of 1910 the Tzaribrod community center has a new board – Al. Vrudlovsky, who is the mayor of the





*Dr. Marko Shukarov at the Culture and Information Centre "Tzaribrod"*

municipality; deputy chairman P. Dimitrov; secretary N. Hristov; librarian N. Pramatarov and treasurer M. Ivanov. The election of the mayor in the board of the community center strongly involves the municipality with its problems. The new board, at its session on March 26, adopts special regulations for working in the reading room. It can serve as a model for many libraries today. The reading room is open to all and is closed only 6 days during the year: on January 1, on Sweet Friday and Saturday, on Easter, on December 24 and 25 (Christmas). On a public board there is a list of the newspapers and magazines available. The readers are forbidden: "to form groups and to talk or read in a loud voice; to smoke tobacco; to fold, scratch or write on the books and newspapers; to take books or magazines out of the reading room; to bring drinks into the room". A member of the board is responsible for keeping these regulations all the time. When Tzaribrod is taken by the Serbian administration, part of the Bulgarian books are moved to Bulgaria.

#### CINEMATOGRAPH

In the theater hall of the "Hristo Botev" organization, on December 6, 1910 is organized a ball with showing of "live pictures". After that the cinematograph settles permanently in the cultural calendar of the people of Tzaribrod.

#### MUSICAL EVENTS

In 1901 in Tzaribrod is created a choir about which we learn from the local newspaper *Nishava*, which encourages

this act: "A group of intelligent young people in the town have undertaken a good initiative and have formed a choir, which will perform every holiday and will participate in the church service". These young people, according to the same newspaper, have done so much in a short time that they can compete with many well-known choirs. From the end of September in the secondary school there are rehearsals of the choir lead masterfully by the teacher of music Bezlov. The same choir of boys and girls is also formed by the students in the secondary school, also conducted by Bezlov. The two choirs are preparing to give several morning performances in the theater hall after which they will make an excursion to Pirot, where they will perform in the evening. It is planned that the excursion includes citizens of the town and they will go and return from Pirot with a special train. A note from the middle of January 1912 informs the people of Tzaribrod that Mrs. Goranova has organized a children's mandolin orchestra which will train free of charge 10-15 children from the primary school. The necessary musical instruments have been already ordered.

## ANNIVERSARIES AND OFFICIAL HOLIDAYS

The celebration of national and local holidays and anniversaries is part not only of the official calendar but





Meta Petrov. *The Bridge*

also an element of the cultural life in the town, which does not have so many cultural institutions except the organizations and societies founded by the citizens and financed by them, with donations, tickets bought at performances, sports events and so on. The celebration of official holidays is also a pretext to demonstrate the creative abilities and talent of various amateur groups and organizations in the town. Following what and how people of Tzaribrod celebrate, one is impressed by the enthusiasm of the people and organizations, by the richness of ideas and the mass participation. Most impressive however is the sincerity and patriotism emanating from speeches, songs and their faces.

#### DECLARATION OF BULGARIAN INDEPENDENCE

On September 22, 1909, i.e. on the next year after this historical date, in Tzaribrod is celebrated officially the declaration of independence. At 9.30 a.m. the students from the secondary school and the primary schools, the military, officials in various institutions and many citizens occupy the "Prince Boris" square. At 10 o'clock sharp the Tzaribrod clergy, accompanied by the priests from the villages, start the service. The Tzaribrod church choir echoes. After the words "Many happy returns" the head teacher Pramatarov makes a speech. He describes the deplorable condition of Bulgaria after the Berlin Congress. The declaration of Bulgaria's independence on September 22 last year is an act against this. He concludes with the words: "Long live

the Bulgarian people, long live the unified Bulgarian kingdom, long live H.R.H. king Ferdinand!" After his last words the military music starts playing and the people start dancing the horo. It lasts until 12 a.m. In the afternoon there is again a big horo dance in the square until 6.30 p.m. In the evening the town is lighted with lanterns, fireworks and exploding bombs. At 5 p.m. a large group of people, headed by the music, starts for the railway station. The music plays a few national pieces, they meet and see off the train from Sofia to Belgrade and again return to the square where they resume the horo until 11 p.m. The same evening the board of the community center gives a performance for collecting donations for the center.

#### THE LIBERATION OF BULGARIA

On February 14 (March 3) every year the town clergy and the choir, lead by Mr. Hristov, perform a service for the liberation of Bulgaria. Most exciting is the enormous number of people gathered at the celebration in 1911, the year the declaration of the Balkan War when the Bulgarian people make the next attempt to remove also the other consequences of the Berlin Congress. "Our people have never gathered in such large numbers for the celebration of our liberation", comments the local newspaper. After the service the young man from Tzaribrod Ivan Nikolov, a student from Sofia, makes a patriotic speech. In the evening the town is lighted by fireworks.



### THE LIBERATION OF TZARIBROD

On November 12 is celebrated the liberation of Tzaribrod after the Serbian occupation during the war of 1885. On this day the people of Tzaribrod celebrate in the most festive way. The celebration of this day is also connected with the erection of a soldiers' monument on the hill of Nishava, which was opened on August 2, 1911.

### THE DAY OF EDUCATION AND LEARNING

The day of the Slavic alphabet and the brothers Cyril and Methodius on May 11 (May 24) every year as it was before the Liberation. After the special church service in 1910 the priests, the citizens, all officers headed by the brigade commander colonel Pachev head for the pavilion where the students from all schools in the town are gathered. They participate in the service, which is followed by a speech by I. Pramatarov about the meaning of the day. Students recite poems. In the end the military music plays since no celebration can go without it. In the afternoon the gymnastic organization "Nishava hero" demonstrates exercises and then a common parade is formed, with the music and the portraits of Saints Cyril and Methodius. The day is celebrated in a similar way the next year too. "In the morning, after the church service, in front of the pavilion of the secondary school decorated with flowers there was a thanksgiving service at which were present all students in town, several military detachments and many citizens of the town and officers. After the end of the service there was a

performance: a speech by the director of the secondary school; speeches, songs and recitals by the students mainly on historical themes. After the speeches members of the gymnastic organization performed a number of exercises. About noon the guests are treated to a glass of wine, the students have candies and pretzels. In the afternoon there is a parade in town. There are dances, music and songs till late at night. The students lift the teachers high with their hands, then the mayor speaks."

### MAY DAY

On May 1 all people of Tzaribrod celebrate with excursions and picnics in the open. In 1912 the students and the soldiers from Tzaribrod made an excursion to the village of Lukovitza and the citizens go out to the green meadows and forests near the town. Many people go to the small monastery and play on the swings till late.

### THE DAY OF ROSES

On June 29 (Petrov day) 1911 Tzaribrod celebrated for the first time the day of roses on the initiative of the Tzaribrod Committee for Fighting Tuberculosis. The aim is to collect money for health care and other social needs. The whole day representatives of the Committee sell roses. For the purpose they have organized a garden party in "Bulgaria" garden, free of charge. The money collected from it is 139 levs.

There are similar initiatives in the neighboring villages

*Celebration at the opening of the filial of the Culture and Information Centre "Tzaribrod" in Bosilegrad, October 2, 1998*





too which marks the establishment of a new tradition on the calendar of holidays. The holiday in Trun is very original: "Since early in the morning from the office of the doctor started coming out ladies smiling and with beautiful faces, holding roses in their hands. They met people with the polite "Good morning" and then said: "Have some of my roses, ten stotinki each".

#### 1100th ANNIVERSARY OF KING KROUM

On July 24, 1911 in Tzaribrod is celebrated the 1100th anniversary of king Kroum. After the service, before the gathered crowd the Justice of Peace G. Petrov makes a speech about the prosperity of Bulgaria during the reign of Kroum and his victory over Niciforus.

#### MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR THE MEN FROM TZARIBROD FALLEN IN THE BALKAN WAR

On December 14, 1913 in Tzaribrod is organized a memorial service for the souls of the 20 men from Tzaribrod fallen in the Balkan War.

#### 150 YEARS OF "SLAVIC-BULGARIAN HISTORY"

On May 11, 1912 in Tzaribrod is celebrated the 150th anniversary of the appearance of "Slavic-Bulgarian History" of Paisiy. The anniversary coincides with the day of Saints Cyril and Methodius. The director of the secondary school pronounced a speech about the contribu-

tion of Father Paisiy and his *History* to the revival of the Bulgarian nation.

#### HOMAGE TO THE MEMORY OF EXARCH JOSEPH

In the early hours of June 25, 1915 all shops in Tzaribrod are closed and decorated with black flags. There is a memorial service and then, following the program, there is a memorial meeting of all citizens of the town. The whole town, all students and the garrison, take part in the ceremony in honor of Exarch Joseph I. Students, legionaries and soldiers with rifles in their hands lane from the church to the town pavilion where the service takes place. Then the Vicar Archangel Popstamenov makes a long and emotional speech about the deeds of the great Bulgarian Exarch Joseph.

## PERIODICALS

Between the Liberation and WW I in Tzaribrod are published four periodicals, in different periods and with a different duration: *Domestic teacher* (1889), *Tzaribrod* (1901-1902), *Nishava* (1909-1915) and *Bell* (1914).

*DOMESTIC TEACHER* is a "scientific and literary magazine". The first issue is published in January 1889. The editor is D. D. Bachvarov. It is published in Tzaribrod but printed in Sofia. In a detailed and emotional address to the

Meta Petrov. *The Greek Houses*







*Christmas children's party at the Culture and Information Centre "Tzaribrod", Bosilegrad, 1999*

readers the editorial board defines, in the spirit of the time, the goals and the program of the magazine referring to the good Bulgarian educational traditions of the Revival: "11-12 years ago our only desire, our major task was to have freedom. To achieve this goal we saw and found our only strength in community centers and literacy. It is true that this was the way to awaken the people. After the opening of community centers and the foundation of various educational organizations for the spreading of knowledge, the liberation came soon. Our aim was fulfilled. It is true that not all became free. The greater part of our Fatherland remained under oppression but we created at least one free place in our dear country to go on with the struggle. For us this was enough for things are achieved gradually... We also created the conditions to work freely not only for the liberation of the remaining part of our country but also for achieving other goals as well..." The last words show that the goals of the publication are not limited to pre-liberation national ideals and the unification of all Bulgarians. It sets itself social and educational goals, which can be seen in sentences like: "Freedom without a good way of living is half freedom" and in the appeals to revive the community centers and enlarge the libraries. Objects of criticism are the defects of the new administration and the servility of the corrupted officials. To these they opposed the system of values of the free individual and its initiative. "Isn't it shameful – the author of this articles concludes – to earn our living only by serving as small officials and to exchange

our respectability for that, when one can earn his living in our rich and beautiful country without being an official!" The way to escape from this malady that has captured some of the liberated Bulgarians he sees in spreading education among the people, the explanation of the constitution and the laws, their rights and the organization of the state. The magazine promises to keep up several regular columns and departments: Juridical, Economic, Literary, Bibliographic, Popular Wisdom, Archeology and History, Spiritual and Miscellaneous.

The editor assures the readers of the magazine that its publication is ensured for two years in advance with 2 or 3 quires every month. But at the end of the third issue (March), which turns out to be the last one, he complains that many requests for the magazine are received without the advance payment of "the small sum of 3 levs". These are most often community centers from the country, which want to have the *Tzaribrod Domestic Teacher* for free. For the community centers this is right, the editor admits, but about the others he exclaims: "What a shame, to ask for books, newspapers and magazines without paying!" He promises to publish his magazine without prepayment of the subscribers but obviously he didn't succeed in that and the magazine does not appear any more. In the first issue we learn about the work of an anonymous author from Tzaribrod. It advertises a political booklet, which could be found only in Tzaribrod and the bookshop of Hr. G. Danov in Plovdiv or at "Reason" in Sofia.





Meta Petrov. *The Quarter Beyond the Railway*

*TZARIBROD* comes out for the first time on September 26, 1901 as a local weekly newspaper of the National-Liberal party in Tzaribrod, exactly two weeks before the parliamentary elections. This has its effect on its programmatic editorial article in which it is said: "Tzaribrod, whose name we took the liberty to borrow, with its citizens and peasants, has deteriorated very much economically to deserve the attention of the government and the people of Bulgaria... Let us popularize its needs, let this be our first obligation..." The editors K. Totev and H. Iliev are probably the authors of the first article entitled "Beware", written again in this vein. It appeals to the people of Tzaribrod to give their vote for a person "honorable, with pure past and high moral". It is not difficult at all to guess what party the candidate that answers this description belongs to. The newspaper is published after the elections as well, as is usually the case with similar publications. It is published for half a year, until March 24, 1902, 17 issues altogether.

*NISHAVA* The first issue is published on September 6, 1909. It is also a weekly but as a newspaper it is a step ahead. Its editor is M. Hadziev and he prints the paper in the Minov-Hadziev printing house in Tzaribrod. In the program "Our goal", published in the first issue, the editorial board assures the people of Tzaribrod that the newspaper will serve only their interests, will not associate itself with

any party and will be the opponent of any government: *Nishava* will not belong to any party, it will be a free and independent newspaper. It will praise the positive and will criticize the negative and the dishonorable, no matter who is responsible... It will bring the news on time to the town and the district and the columns of the paper will be open for anyone who wants to bring benefit to his fellow citizens..."

The editorial board of *Nishava* tries to keep his promises and answers, within their capabilities, the most modern requirements for freedom and independence of the press. Imitating the biggest newspapers, *Nishava* tries to sting pungently public figures, making public their secrets or deplorable deeds. Public figures on whom the newspaper tests its sharp tongue and eyes, even in the private sphere, are very often the local teachers, bank officials or officers in the municipality. *Nishava* is published every week until September 12, 1912, when it stops for a year and a half because of the Balkan and the Inter-ally War. It starts again on November 22, 1913. The first materials in the new issues of *Nishava* suggest that the editors, who have shared with the people the two wars and the conceit and shortsightedness of the ruling class, have decided to criticize mercilessly all defects in public life and they appeal for the help of the citizens: "We ask that all underprivileged bring us information so that we can nail to the pillory all





*Literary evening, dedicated to 120 years of the birth of the Bulgarian poet Peyo Yavorov, Bosilegrad, December 30, 1998*

people aiming at fame and easy money, deserters and people with no patriotic feelings..."

The last issue of the newspaper comes out on September 5, 1915 in the heat of another war that seems promising but that has brought much disappointment and suffering – WW I. After the end of this war the Bulgarians from Tzaribrod will remain outside the borders of Bulgaria.

*BELL* is a weekly magazine for "humor, satire and public life", edited by Milcho Karolev. At first it is printed in the printing house of the Hadziev brothers in Tzaribrod. The first issue comes out on June 1, 1919, when the war and its illusions have gone away. What has remained is destruction, despair, the black clothes of the women and the insecurity of the future. The fate of the Tzaribrod region is not clear at all too. Rumors that the victors were ready to give it to Serbia, which wanted it very insistently as a strategic guarantee against "the permanent Bulgarian threat" make the hearts of the people of Tzaribrod sink. In this difficult moment, when all newspapers and cultural institutions in Tzaribrod are waiting in apprehension, the illustrated publication for humor and satire *Bell* appears perhaps to demonstrate that the instinct for life is victorious over the violence of war and all the injustices in the peace treaties. The magazine publishes humorous poems and short stories, epigrams, feuilletons, anecdotes, caricatures (drawn

by the editor in chief) and all sorts of actual stories. There are also some regular columns like "Odds and ends", "The logic of the shop", "Serious department" and "Tzaribrod anthology". The magazine is politically neutral but publishes political satire, sometimes good, like the riddle "What is a political convert?" The answer is: "He was eating lots of the theory of Marx, Babel, Engels, Kautzky and so on, and now he denies everything". Or the caricature of a candidate for a member of parliament, who is just awaking in the morning. He is talking to himself looking at the list of candidates: "First is D-r Danev, second Hodzov, third – I don't know who, and I – only in the twelfth position". The last issue of the magazine, number 8, is published on July 27, 1919. In it is published the following "Announcement", which sounds today like black humor and it turns out to be really the last one. It is the last hope of the people of Tzaribrod that they can avoid the threat of being separated from Bulgaria after the signing of the Neuilly Peace Treaty. It goes like this: "Mr. and Mrs. Peaceful Conference have the pleasure to invite Mr. Stamboliysky for a godfather, and the gentlemen Todorov, Sakuzov, Ganev – as guests at the christening of their child of male sex named Peace. The ceremony will take place on the 25th this month, at 10 a.m. in the cathedral "Sent Pierre" in the town of Versailles".





Meta Petrov. *The Last Small Shops*

In connection with the separation of Tzaribrod from Bulgaria after WW I the French lawyer at the Paris Court of Appeal George Desbont notes in his book entitled "Bulgaria after the Neuilly Treaty" that this town is "one of the symbols of Bulgarian patriotism", as Strasbourg is for the French. Probably for that reason his Bulgarian colleague D-r Peter Zubov, born in Pirot and a graduate of Geneva, Doctor of Law and a volunteer in the Serbo-Bulgarian War of 1885, dreams to live in the time when the Bulgarian and the Serb will live together, mutually respecting their culture, books and language, as the Swiss German and the Swiss French did at that time in a peaceful and well ordered Switzerland, not so far from the Balkans.

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